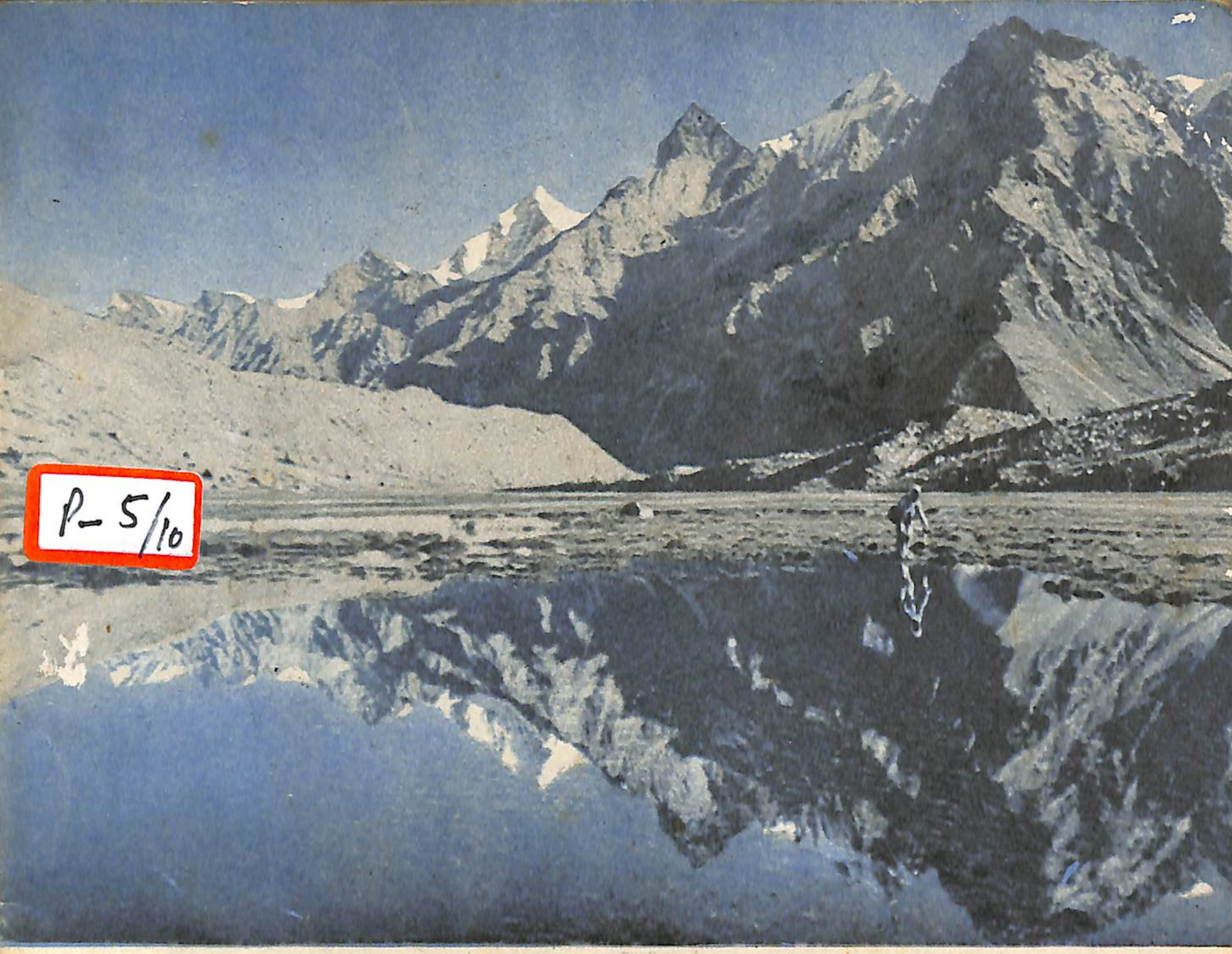


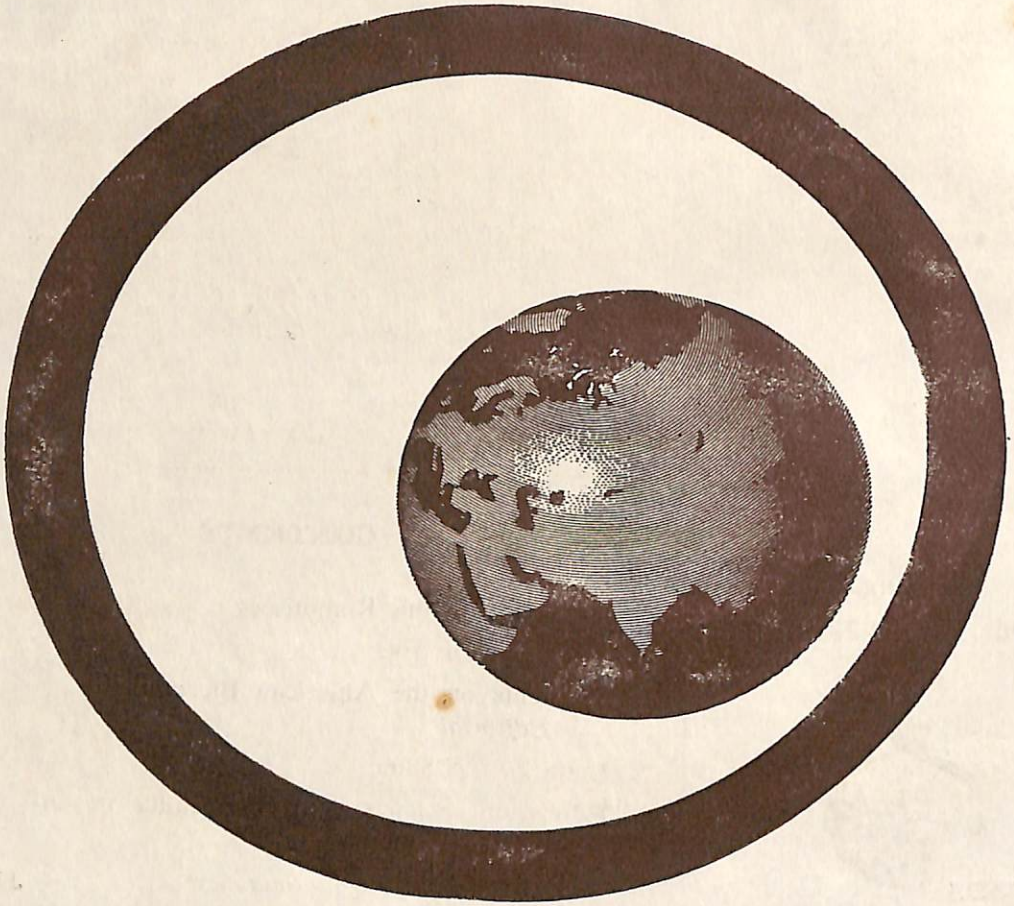
VOL. LXXXI JULY 1976

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS



Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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JULY 1976

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Reflections of Mounts Shwetwana, Thailu, Sudarsan in a lake in Tapovan ground, Central Himalayas.

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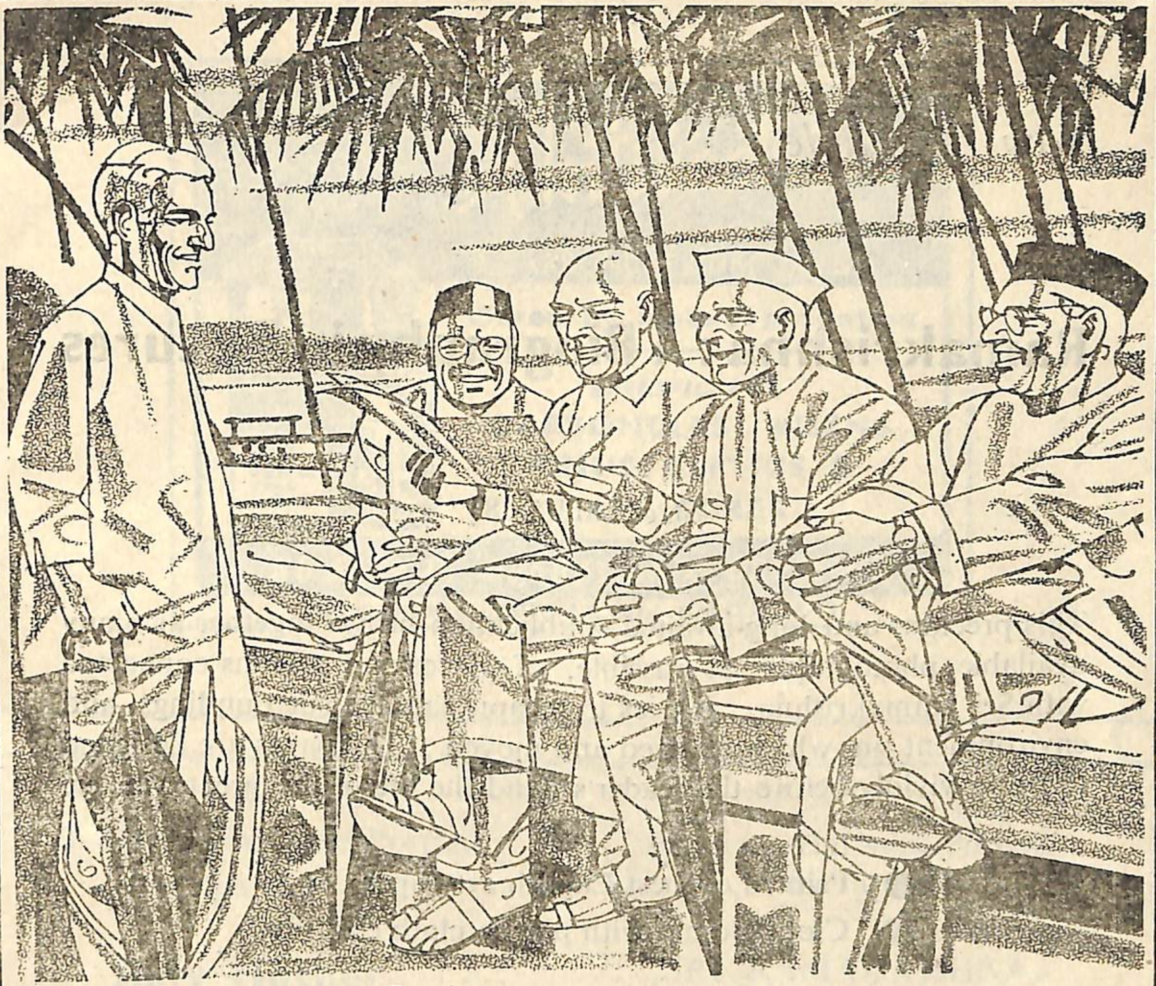
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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI JULY 1976 No. 7

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'While worshipping God, one should assume a definite attitude. I have three attitudes: the attitude of a child, the attitude of a maidservant, and the attitude of a friend. For a long time I regarded myself as a maidservant and a woman companion of God; at that time I used to wear skirts and ornaments, like a woman. The attitude of a child is very good.'

*

'... one should look after one's mother as long as she is alive. I used to worship my mother with flowers and sandal-paste. It is the Mother of the Universe who is embodied as our earthly mother.'

*

'I used to sleep in the same room with Mathur and his wife. They took care of me as if I were their own child. I was then passing through a state of divine madness. Mathur would ask me, "Father, do you hear our conversation?" "Yes", I would reply.'

*

'As long as God retains the ego in a man, he should establish a definite relationship with God, calling on Him as Master, Mother, Friend, or the like. I spent one year as a handmaid—the handmaid of the Divine Mother, the Embodiment of Brahman. I used to dress myself as a woman. I put on a nose-ring. One can conquer lust by assuming the attitude of a woman.'

*

'I spent many days as the handmaid of God. I dressed myself in women's clothes, put on ornaments, and covered the upper part of my body with a scarf, just like a woman. With the scarf on I used to perform the evening worship before the image.'

*

'For many days I cherished the feeling that I was a companion of the Divine Mother. I used to say: "I am the handmaid of Brahmamayi, the Blissful Mother. O companions of the Divine Mother, make me the Mother's handmaid! I shall go about proudly, saying, 'I am Brahmamayi's handmaid!'"'

*

'At that time I was almost unconscious of the outer world. Mathur Babu kept me at his Janbazar mansion a few days. While living there I regarded myself as the handmaid of the Divine Mother. The ladies of the house didn't feel at all bashful with me. They felt as free before me as women feel before a small boy or girl. I used to escort Mathur's daughter to her husband's chamber with the maidservant.

'...Once I imitated a professional woman singer for a man singer. He said my acting was quite correct and asked me where I had learnt it.' [The Master repeated his imitation for the devotees, and they burst into laughter.]

*

'It is written in the devotional scriptures that nineteen kinds of emotions manifested in one receptacle are together called the Mahabhava.[1] The whole life of a man is required for the practice of one such emotion before he can attain perfection in it. Nineteen such moods [emotions or bhavas] were fully manifested all together here (showing his own body) in one receptacle.

'...Is it ever possible to describe the glory and sweetness of that incomparable, pure, bright form of Radha who renounced her all for the love of Krishna? The splendour of her body was bright yellow like the pollens of Nagakesara (Mesua ferrea) flowers.'

'The complexion of Sri Krishna I used to see then (while practising Madhura Bhava[2]) was like this'—said the Master, showing a flower of grass.

*

'My joy after that experience was equal to the pain I suffered before it. Mahabhava is a divine ecstasy; it shakes the body and mind to their very foundation. It is like a huge elephant entering a small hut. The house shakes to its foundation. Perhaps it falls to pieces.

'The burning pain that one feels when one is separated from God is not an ordinary feeling. It is said that the fire of this anguish in Rupa and Sanatana[3] scorched the leaves of the tree under which they sat. I was unconscious three days in that state. I couldn't move. I lay in one place. When I regained consciousness, the [Bhairavi] Brahmani took me out for a bath. Her hand couldn't bear the touch of my skin; so my body had to be covered with a heavy sheet. Only then could she hold me with her hand and lead me to the bathing-place. The earth that had stuck to my body while I was lying on the ground had become baked.

'In that state I felt as if a ploughshare were passing through my backbone. I cried out: "Oh, I am dying! I am dying!" But afterwards I was filled with great joy.'

---

[1] Mahabhava: the most intense ecstatic love for God, which in the Vaishnavite tradition is directed to Sri Krishna, and is greatly aided by identifying oneself with Sri Radha, or one of Her woman-companions.

[2] Madhura Bhava: one of the five attitudes cherished by the Vaishnava devotee towards his ideal Deity, Krishna: the attitude of wife toward husband or of a woman toward her paramour.

[3] Rupa and Sanatana: two noted disciples of Sri Chaitanya.

ONWARD FOR EVER!

The guiding motive of mankind should be charity towards men, charity towards all animals. But these are all various expressions of that eternal truth that 'I am the universe; this universe is one.' Or else, where is the reason? Why should I do good to my fellowmen? Why should I do good to others? What compels me? It is sympathy, the feeling of sameness everywhere. The hardest hearts feel sympathy for other beings sometimes. Even the man who gets frightened if he is told that this assumed individuality is really a delusion, that it is ignoble to try to cling to this apparent individuality, that very man will tell you that extreme self-abnegation is the centre of all morality. And what is perfect self-abnegation? It means the abnegation of this apparent self, the abnegation of all selfishness. This idea of 'me' and 'mine' — Ahamkara and Mamata—is the result of past superstition, and the more this present self passes away, the more the real Self becomes manifest. This is true self-abnegation, the centre, the basis, the gist of all moral teaching; and whether man knows it or not, the whole world is slowly going towards it, practising it more or less. Only, the vast majority of mankind are doing it unconsciously. Let them do it consciously.

Vivekananda

THOUGHTS ON THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL

EDITORIAL

I

The people of the United States of America and their Federal and State Governments have been joyfully observing the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution, which began in 1775, and the celebrations will culminate this month in the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence (the fourth of the month). They look back on their two-hundred-years-long history of unbroken democracy, of liberty and glorious achievements, with justifiable pride and look forward with confidence and optimism to shining centuries of free national life. People the world over, cherishing the values of human liberty, social equality, and democratic rule, cheer this great Republic for its achievements, and wish it an equally glorious future. To these streams of cheers and greetings, our Journal—founded and guided by Swami Vivekananda whose life and work are intimately linked with the U.S.A.—adds its own good wishes and blessings.

In 1898 Swami Vivekananda, while in Kashmir with a few Western disciples most of whom were Americans, composed a poem on the occasion of the surprise fourth-of-July celebration for the group. Addressing the spirit of liberty as embodied in the American nation, and identifying that with the sun, Swamiji wrote there in part:

> 'Move on, O lord, in thy resistless path,
> Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world,
> Till every land reflects thy light,
> Till men and women, with uplifted head,
> Behold their shackles broken and know,
> In springing joy their life renewed!'

These lines of Swamiji fully summarize our own feelings and wishes on this significant occasion of the Bicentennial.

II

In the vigorous opposition of the American colonies to the restrictions and tyranny of British monarchy, began the American Revolution which in its second year produced the Declaration of Independence, and grew into a full scale war with the former rulers. Although there was great patriotic fervour and grim determination to wrest independence from the hands of the British, victory for the thirteen breakaway colonies could finally come only after enormous bloodshed, loss of life and property, long periods of despondency and painful hours of doubt. The Revolution was followed by the gradual unification of all the sovereign units under one Constitution and a single Federal Government. In drafting this Constitution and in designing the political structure, the American Founding Fathers had distilled the best of their historical heritage from ancient Greece to 17th-century England. For these past two centuries, thus, the two powerful documents, the Declaration of Independence and the (U.S.A.) Constitution, enshrining the Bill of Rights, have inspired not only successive generations of Americans to hold on to their precious heritage, but also many other oppressed peoples even to the present day to win freedom for themselves. It is undoubtedly true that history has been profoundly influenced by the American Revolution. Thus the confidence with which Thomas Jefferson wrote the following words in a letter to his friend Joseph Priestley, is justified by the subsequent events of history:

> 'We feel that we are acting under obligations not confined to the limits of our own society. It is impossible not to be sensible that we are acting for all mankind.'

Liberty, social equality, and opportunity are the song of the American soul. Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution speak of these great values in stirring vibrant phrases. The first document declares the fact of human equality to be a self-evident truth, and the rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness to be among the inalienable rights with which the Creator has endowed every human soul. The Bill of Rights, which is actually the group of the ten first amendments to the original Constitution, preserves the sanctity of individual rights—such as freedom of religion, of speech, of the press, and of assembly—against governmental encroachment. Thus America has become the land of freedom, and the love of liberty has entered into the very marrow of its citizens! Long ago did Thomas Paine, one of the high priests of liberty, address these words to his compatriots:

> 'O, ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only tyranny but the tyrant, stand forth. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe...Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger and England hath given her warning to depart. O, receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.'

And indeed, fugitives from political, economic, social and/or religious oppression, of almost all continents, have found a refuge and a second homeland in America. We know that the pilgrim fathers who crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower* and landed at Cape Cod were seekers of freedom of worship. The early European—and not merely Anglo-Saxon—immigrants to America who shared its economic prosperity and breathed its air of equality, used to write back to their homes glowing descriptions of this wonderful land of freedom and wealth for all. A letter, for instance, by a Scandinavian settler to his relatives and friends, read in part thus:

> '...out here we own two hundred acres. Two hundred acres... The hired man

> eats at the Master's table. Pastors and bankers carry market baskets... My cap is not worn out by lifting it in the presence of gentlemen... There is no title sickness here. I say, "Hello, Peter," not "good morning, Mr. Jeweller Anderson."... I do not lay [*sic*] awake fearing military conscription... I vote as I please and vote against people all the time without being downed... When I hate something I just move without asking any official or clergy... Freedom, freedom, that is the way here. It lifts the lowly and brings down the great.'

According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the total number of immigrants to the U.S.A. between 1820 and 1970 exceeded 45 millions. It was a broad-spectrum influx representing almost all countries and races: and surprisingly, even people from the Communist states of U.S.S.R. and China. By coming to love the American national ideals and to share the belief in the egalitarian ideas, these immigrants, almost all, soon develop the sense of Americanhood which binds them emotionally and patriotically to their new motherland.

Compared to many other nations, especially in the Old World, the U.S.A. is a young nation. Two centuries in the life of a nation do not generally bring it even to adulthood! Yet judging by the way the U.S.A. has withstood some of the most trying political and economic situations and shocks during its relatively short life, it has already proved the stability and vitality of its democratic system. Youthfulness, energy, enterprise, optimism, resiliency, concern for the welfare of the poor of the world, openness of mind, generosity, and a spirit of assimilation—all these qualities, in varying degree, characterize a typical 'American'. Proportionate to its geographical vastness, political currents and cross-currents, and sociological variety, the problems faced by the U.S.A. are bewilderingly complex. But these American people and their leadership are proving their mettle and maturity by tackling these problems with appreciable success. In a Bicentennial message sent at the request of the Editors of a leading U.S. magazine, the French President, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, effectively summarizes the youthful and dynamic American national character in the following words:

> 'America...is power, space, democracy. It is the land of every experiment, of every curiosity, even of every excess, all absorbed finally in the crucible of progress, just as all those people of diverse ethnic origins were absorbed who came to the New World, often to find refuge, always to find a field for their energy and imagination. You have remained in many respects a nation of pioneers, and your society retains an exceptional dynamism. To quote Tocqueville, whose thought has been a shaping influence on our liberal society: "The idea of what is new is intimately linked in America with the idea of what is better." America means enterprise, initiative, movement, and also organization and efficiency. All this does not come without a certain roughness—softened by an ever available hospitality and boundless generosity.'[1]

This young nation's energy, freedom, vision, courage, optimism, and dynamic creativity have influenced every field of human thought and endeavour. In science, technology, research and development, education, economics, medicine, political science, literature, arts—to mention only a few most important of such fields—the American achievements and contributions are brilliant and breathtaking. One begins to wonder whether at any time in history, any single country has achieved so much in so short a time.

---

[1] *Time* (Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y., 10020), dated 24 May 1976, p. 24

III

These merits and achievements of this American nation, however, should not dazzle anyone into blindness to its shortcomings and failures. These latter, nevertheless, are bound to exist alongside their counterparts in any nation or society—what to speak of one so largely devoted to external growth and change! The very freedom, wealth, enterprise, and unending race for 'achieving' have bred serious sociological, psychological, and spiritual problems in this society. Extreme preoccupation with materialistic values and pursuits, invariably generates a form of world-weariness and an intolerable revulsion against materialism—perhaps even against life itself! Accordingly, social and inter-personal tensions, psychopathic disorders, and spiritual emptiness are bound to seize whole sections of any such society. There is an old Sanskrit adage, to the effect that each one of these four, namely, youth, wealth and possessions, overlordship, and indiscrimination, can bring about ruin—what to speak of the combination of all four in one person! What is applicable to an individual is, in general, here applicable to a nation too. The United States of America, with its youthfulness, material wealth, world-leadership and military might, and the heady sense of success, is in great moral and spiritual danger. Moral restraints and spiritual values cannot be imposed with any lasting effect, from outside. People themselves will have to wake up to the need and basic importance of these values, and voluntarily make them a part of their lives, private and public. Thoughtful sections of American society, we hope, will reinforce their creaking family, social and political structures by voluntarily raising the inner checks—taught and exemplified by all great men and religions—and by cherishing higher goals and values.

As events of recent decades have shown, there is a deplorable tendency in the U.S.A. and its leadership to think that their national ideals and aspirations are the only worthwhile ideals and aspirations for any nation, and therefore should be accepted by all.[2] This tendency is particularly evident in the U.S.A.'s grim hatred of and fight against the totalitarian ideology as represented by Communism. What may be good and great for Americans, with their own cultural and national heritage, may not be so for other cultures and nations, with their own different circumstances, outlooks, and heritages. Though the hysterical fear of the forties and fifties, of Communism's overrunning the whole world, has now proved nearly baseless, still America's obsession has led her into military alliances and inevitable wars, which show no sign of abatement even now. This has also frequently led that great and freedom-loving Republic into the supporting of inhumane dictatorships! The costly lessons to be learnt by the U.S., from the fiascos resulting from pursuit of such belligerent policies—the latest such fiasco being the Vietnam War—are many and historically inescapable, for all save those who are entirely blind to facts.

Furthermore, though this American Republic from its inception has been devoted to 'peace', friendship and universal welfare, it has, by the strange irony of circumstances, often become in fact a promoter of

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[2] Cf. Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. I (1965), pp. 64-6: 'An American thinks that whatever an American does in accordance with the custom of his country is the best... This is quite a natural mistake which all of us are apt to make. But it is very harmful; it is the cause of half the uncharitableness found in the world... Therefore... we should always try to see the duty of others through their own eyes, and never judge the customs of other peoples by our own standard.'

dissensions and wars, overtly and covertly. Nowhere is this fact more evident than in its many military pacts, with conveniently resulting sale of arms to bellicose countries. Truth is stranger than fiction. This great Republic seems, for at least a half-century now, to have been keeping its economy in trim—pacts or no pacts—by extensive sale of its destructive military hardware to all sorts of nations all over the world; and can well be said to have become 'the munitions monarch of the world' as well as their most adept salesman. To quote an insightfully critical observation of Prof. Emmet John Hughes, professor of politics at Rutgers University (New Brunswick, N. J.), in his thought-provoking article 'The Third Century, the Third Chance':

> 'The Republic dedicated from birth to the spread of universal ideas has become instead the nation more devoted than all others to the universal sale of arms. Within the last decade, the annual sum of these sales has soared from $2 billion to $11 billion; and since World War II, the nation has supplied some 100 billion dollars' worth of weapons to help arm no fewer than 136 countries with a sort of savage impartiality. Thus the self-appointed guardian of international peace has managed to make itself the munitions monarch of the world.'[3]

Will not this spiralling policy of nurturing violence recoil on the nation grievously? Possibly the retribution for this national karma is already showing up in the forms of juvenile delinquency, violent neighbourhoods, and the waves of urban crime in the U.S.A. You cannot consistently encourage bloodshed abroad, without experiencing sanguinary repercussions at home!

Assuredly this great nation, in her two-century-long existence, has had many astounding triumphs and many ignominious failures. Actually it seems unlikely that any nation of similar proportions and complexity could have shown a brighter record of performances. The nation need not gloat over her successes nor shamefacedly brood over her failures. At the dawn of the third century of her historic existence, what this young nation most needs is a vivid remembrance of the *idea* that brought her and her civilization into being, a rededication to her ideals, a firm resolve to make those ideals practical in everyday life, a calm self-confidence in her ability to contend with the country's problems, and an abiding faith in the Almighty Father and His unfailing guidance and grace.

IV

Despite her freedom, material wealth, progress, and military might, the U.S.A. is a restless and unhappy nation. Schizophrenia, drug addiction, broken homes, alienation, crime, and youth rebellion, are grave symptoms of a deep spiritual malaise. In this country with the highest standard of living in the world, nearly half (49%) the respondents to a recent public-opinion-poll question, 'Do you believe that life is getting better or worse in terms of happiness?' regretfully answered, 'worse'.[4] To this spiritual malady, the remedy lies in spiritual pursuit and fulfilment, not in economic prosperity or enervating indulgence or mind-shattering drugs.

Undoubtedly, there has been in America a widespread revival of interest in religion, Eastern and Western, in recent years. Large sections of the people, youths especially, are seeking peace, meaningful life,

3 *Saturday Review* (488 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10022), dated 13 December 1975, p. 59

4 *vide The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th Ed.), Macropaedia, Vol. 18, p. 926

and fulfilment in religious cults and practices, in prayer and contemplation, in Zen and Yoga meditations. Nevertheless, unfortunately the number of genuine teachers and guides is very small, and so many of these seekers fall into the hands of charlatans, bogus Yogis thirsting for dollars and fame, occultists, magicians, and devil-worshippers. Therefore, as always, but most acutely in the midst of such hazards, extreme caution is necessary in accepting any new spiritual teacher or path. We strongly urge that faddism and novelty-hunting should be totally avoided.

Anticipating, as it were, this spiritual hunger of America, Swami Vivekananda—hailed by many of his contemporaries as a prophet of the stature of Christ and the Buddha—taught the pure religion of Vedānta in America in the final decade of the last century. He pointed out that Vedānta, while embodying the rationale of all religious experience everywhere, teaches a God who is both immanent in man and the universe, and yet transcending both. Swamiji taught the four Yogas of love, knowledge, work, and psychic control as the practical ways of realizing this inherent spiritual truth. He taught through his lectures and classes; and more intensely through his holy and perfected life. His teachings are preserved in his invaluable *Works,* and preached by the many Vedanta Centres in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. On this occasion of the Bicentennial, we invite the genuine seekers of religion to the universal abode of Vedānta, in order to partake of the spiritual banquet bountifully laid out by Swamiji, one of the greatest teachers of mankind of all times.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

Sri Sri Ramakrishna the Refuge

Calcutta
21/5/25

My dear ——,

I am glad to receive yours of the 16th inst.

I am happy to know that that Svargashram[1] is to your liking. Be absorbed with all your heart and soul in spiritual practices and adoration [of the Lord]. I will be delighted at it. Why only for a few days? One has to be engaged in them all through one's life. May you have devotion to and faith in the feet of Sri Sri Thakur [Ramakrishna]—I pray for it. Regarding *japa* (repetition of mantra or the Lord's name) and meditation, practise as much as your capacity permits; do not try to do anything beyond your capacity. You should certainly be alert, to keep the body in good health. There is no rule that you should do reading for so many hours and *japa* and meditation for so many hours. But then, you should try gradually to increase the period of *japa* and meditation. Try always to practise recollectedness and contemplative

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[1] A secluded place with beautiful surroundings, opposite to Hrishikesh on the Ganges, resorted to by many for meditation and spiritual disciplines.

thinking. Undoubtedly, you have to take bath, food, rest, and exercise with regularity. There is no need to observe silence. It will be all right if you do not talk unnecessarily. It is not necessary to do *puraścaraṇa,*[2] either from sunup to sundown or according to the phases of the moon. I have told you about daily *puraścaraṇa,* and you should practise accordingly.

Do not despair if at the beginning you do not get any result from your spiritual practices and worship. If you keep up the practice with patience and resolution, you will get its result at the right time—there is no doubt about it. Later on, if you proceed still further, you will come to understand everything from within.

What more shall I say? We are all well. Know that you have my blessings always. Convey the same to V—— and all others.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
26/Agrahāyaṇ/1328 [3]

Dear Srimati S ——,

I am glad to receive your letter. The care and help you all have been able to give—and are still giving—during the illness of M——'s third sister and [to her family] even after her death, have made me very happy. Thus forgetting ourselves, the more we can look after others, the greater will it be for our good. I pray that all of you may rise above all kinds of attraction and hatred and be able to serve everyone with the attitude that each is a form of Sri Sri Thakur.

According to your wish, I will give four rupees for the Holy Mother's birthday celebration...

You will not be able to attend the birthday puja (ritualistic worship), by the Mother's will, to be sure. But on that day She will graciously tune your mind and ours to the same note in such a way that, though the bodies will remain far apart, there will be flowing within a flood of bliss of a rare type. Please know that peace is to be found in nothing else except in becoming aware that everything happens according to the Mother's will, and in surrendering oneself to Her in thought, word and deed. I have heard Swamiji [Vivekananda] singing this song before Sri Sri Thakur on many a day:

'In whatever state You keep me at any time,
It is all for my good, if I do not forget You:
Whether [You keep me] besmeared with ashes, or
Ornament me with gems, jewels or gold,
Place me under a tree or on a throne.'

As soon as I got your letter this morning, I read it to Yogin-Ma.[4] Her

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[2] *Puraścaraṇa*: a vow to perform *japa* a certain number of times a day, methodically increasing and then decreasing the amount thereof.

[3] Agrahāyaṇ: the eighth month of the Bengali year, included within December-January. 26 Agrahāyaṇ 1328 would fall in 1922 early January.

[4] Yogin-Ma and Golap-Ma: well-known woman-disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who were close companions of the Holy Mother.

health and Golap-Ma's[4] are the same as before; that is to say, one or the other ailment is always there. But their engagement in their duties is also as before. Accept their blessings and mine too. Convey blessings to G—— and S——. My body is well nowadays. Boro Maharaj [Brahmananda?]...has not yet come back.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
26/6/26

Dear Sriman K——,

I received duly your two letters of 7th and 9th Āṣāḍh,[5] and am replying now.

You have written about the outrageous conduct of the village rogues. In my opinion the wicked are to be curbed by filing a lawsuit... If you are agreeable to conduct the suit, I shall somehow send you the expenses from here...

I shall give as much as I can of the extra expenses of the celebration. But then, because there is little money in my hands, instead of giving all at one time, I shall give it slowly. I know that, in the past as well as now, you have been regularly asking of me only the legitimate expenses. And therefore I was never annoyed with you. That [you think I am annoyed] is [only] your wrong understanding. Nevertheless it is not feasible for me regularly to continue collecting all the expenses. You have to depend on the Mother, and learn to stand on your own feet and conduct the work of that place. Lest you should forget this fact, I might occasionally have told you something a bit sharply. In view of the way my body is day by day becoming inefficient, it is increasingly difficult for me to keep any burden of responsibility. From now on, stand on your own feet—to tell this to you, is my purpose. But then, so long as I am alive, keep me informed of all matters. If I can give you some help in all such matters, it will be excellent; if I cannot, do not become depressed. By the grace of Mother and the efforts of all these years, the work has improved greatly in its financial aspect. Now if you can all try a little more, you will be able to stand on your own feet and the work will also become established...

My health is much better now. No rains here also, and it is very hot. Accept my blessings and convey the same to all others there.

If you think that to curb the wicked it is good to file a suit, in that case do not back off. But if you think that it [outrage] can be redressed—and will not occur again—if some fine, as agreed upon among yourselves, is imposed, then you can do that.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

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5 Āṣāḍh: third month of the Bengali year, included within June-July.

EDUCATION, SCIENCE, AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE LIGHT OF VEDĀNTA

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE MODERN EMBODIMENT OF PARA VIDYA

The Indian experience and conviction of the pre-eminence and greatness of *parā vidyā,* and its being the consummation of all *aparā vidyā,* is glowingly illustrated, in our own time, in the appearance of Sri Ramakrishna as the very embodiment of *parā vidyā,* and in the arresting story of the discipleship of Narendra, a product of the modern education in *aparā vidyā,* under him. This story also clearly illustrates the Indian conviction that there is not only no opposition, but also an ever-present close kinship, between the two, and that they form but the two departments of one and the same *vidyā* or science, the science of Total Reality, the philosophy of *samyagjñāna.* Thus physical sciences and the science of spirituality form two inseparable aspects of the *samyagjñāna* of Vedānta. This is specially highlighted in the enigmatic verses, 9 to 14, of the *Īśā-upaniṣad.*[17]

Sri Ramakrishna represented the entire gamut of *parā vidyā* in its purest form, without any admixture of *aparā vidyā.* His spirited reply to his elder brother Ramkumar's insistence that he, like other youths around him, should go to school and continue his education in *aparā vidyā,* contains a profound value-estimate of all self-sufficient secular knowledge. In the words of the biographers of Swami Vivekananda:

'His brother was desirous of arousing his interest in secular education, but Sri Ramakrishna (then, Gadadhar), who was already beginning to realize that he was born for a definite purpose, asked himself, "Shall I attain piety, devotion, and divine fervour by pursuing this education?" "No", was the emphatic reply of his mind. "Will it enable me to be as God-fearing and upright as my father?" "No", echoed his innate religious instinct. "Shall I be able to realize God through this education and escape from universal ignorance and the glamour of material enjoyments?" The same reply came from his heart.... To his brother's persuasion he said emphatically, "Brother, what shall I do with a mere bread-winning education (*cāl-kolā bāndhāno vidyā*): I would rather acquire that wisdom which will illumine my heart and getting which, one is satisfied for ever." '[18]

And for the next twelve years, we find Sri Ramakrishna as a scientific explorer of the *within* of nature, an untiring experimenter in the field of *parā vidyā* in all its phases, and emerging, at the end of it all, as a wise, childlike, sweet, and lovable personality, at once human and divine, with an enormous attraction to draw all types and levels of human beings unto himself—atheists and agnostics, intellectuals and simple devotees, artists and leaders of society, representatives of the old Hindu tradition as much as representatives of the modern Western knowledge and culture, men as well as women. In-

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17 *vide* Swami Ranganathananda: *The Message of the Upaniṣads* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay, 1971) pp. 133-45

18 His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1949), p. 33

troducing this Sri Ramakrishna to his Western readers, Romain Rolland says:

> 'From the magnificent procession of spiritual heroes whom we shall survey later, I have chosen two men who have won my regard, because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul. They are, if one may say so, its Mozart and its Beethoven—*Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda...
>
> 'I am bringing to Europe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name Ramakrishna...
>
> 'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years (1886), his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, *whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and gods...*
>
> 'It is my desire to bring the sound of the beating of that artery to the ears of fever-stricken Europe, which has murdered sleep. I wish to wet its lips with the blood of immortality.' [19] (italics ours)

NARENDRA'S DISCIPLESHIP UNDER SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE MEETING OF PARA VIDYA AND APARA VIDYA

In that impressive procession of seekers came young Narendra who, in all that he had achieved till then by way of education and upbringing, represented the best of the *aparā vidyā* of the modern age. Physically strong, youthful, mentally alert, critical, doubting, and seeking, possessed of a vast store of traditional Indian and modern Western knowledge, Narendra was, to all appearances, the exact opposite of Sri Ramakrishna. With his inner life tossed on the high waves of doubts and tensions, Narendra approached Sri Ramakrishna, who was, as described by Śaṅkarācarya in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, nirindhana iva analaḥ*—'calm and tranquil like a fire after its fuel has been burnt down', and *ahetuka-dayā-sindhuḥ bandhurānamatām*—'an ocean of motiveless compassion and a friend of all who resort to him'. It was a momentous scene of *aparā vidyā* meeting *parā vidyā,* a scene that had been enacted several times before in India's spiritual history. The closest in kinship to this episode is the story of much-learned Nārada's discipleship under Sage Sanatkumāra of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad,* over four thousand years ago:

> 'Please teach me, O Blessed One....I am, O Blessed One, only a knower of words and their meanings, not a knower of the Self; and I have heard from great ones like you that only a knower of the Self crosses all sorrow. I am in sorrow, O Blessed One. Please help me, O Blessed One, to cross (the ocean of) sorrow (through the ship of *adhyātmavidyā*).' [20]

Sage Sanatkumāra then helped Nārada to rise from knowledge to wisdom and to cross the vast ocean of spiritual blindness and its attendant sorrows, says the Upaniṣad in its concluding verse of the chapter:

> 'To him, whose impurities of the heart had been washed away, the Blessed Sanatkumāra shows the supreme Truth

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19 Romain Rolland: *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, 1947), pp. 8-14

20 अधीहि भगव इति.. सोऽहं भगवो मन्त्रविदेवास्मि, न आत्मवित् ; श्रुतं मे भगवद्दृशेभ्य: तरति शोकं आत्मविदिति । सोऽहं भगव: शोचामि । तं मा भगवन् शोकस्य पारं तारयतु इति ।

Chāndogya-upaniṣad, VII. 1. 1-3

beyond all darkness (of ignorance and sorrow).'[21]

Vivekananda: the Harmony of All Human Energy

Similarly, during the five years of his discipleship under Sri Ramakrishna, first at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple and later at the Cossipore garden house, Narendra matured his *aparā vidyā* into *parā vidyā*, matured his knowledge into wisdom, and became a perfect synthesis of both the physical sciences and the science of spirituality, and also, accordingly, of the West and the East. Portraying the Vivekananda that emerged at the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna in August 1886, out of the Narendra who had gone to him five years earlier, Romain Rolland says:

> '*In the two words equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up.* He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth, and he travelled towards Unity along them all simultaneously. *He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy.*'[22] (italics ours)

Need for a Synthesis of Apara Vidya and Para Vidya in Education

Our education has to enable our students to achieve at least a fraction of this synthesis of East and West, spirituality and science, contemplation and action. It is *parā vidyā*, the *highest* education, that fosters in man ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual values, including the moral values associated with pure science. The harmony of all these values, and the intrinsic harmony between *parā vidyā* and *aparā vidyā*, always upheld in Vedānta, became revealed in our time in the deep spiritual kinship between Narendra and Sri Ramakrishna. All such values emerge from out of the depths of the human spirit at a certain stage of evolution and of some measure of mastery of the environment by man; they do not emerge from physical nature itself. It is folly, therefore, to believe or to expect that they will automatically result from industry or from technological manipulations of external nature, and from the wealth resulting from such achievements. Protesting against such widely held modern folly, Bertrand Russell says:

> 'The machine as an object of adoration is the modern form of Satan, and its worship is the modern diabolism...
> 'Whatever else may be mechanical, values are not, and this is something which no political philosopher must forget.'[23]

It is thus obvious that, if the current school and university education is *high* and *higher* education, the education that Narendra received from Sri Ramakrishna, bearing such wonderful fruits of character, deep as the ocean and broad as the skies, is the *highest* education into which the other two, to fulfil themselves, must lead a child. Sri Ramakrishna's experience and example also make it clear that man can enter into, and benefit from, this *parā vidyā* from any stage or level of his *aparā vidyā* education. Wisdom can accompany, and enliven, and creatively stimulate knowledge at any level—primary or secondary,

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21 तस्मै मृदितकषायाय तमसस्पारं दर्शयति भगवान् सनत्कुमारः ।

22 Rolland: *Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Advaita Ashrama, 1947), p. 310

23 *Impact of Science on Society*, p. 77

under-graduate or post-graduate; it is also equally clear that, without a little of that wisdom, knowledge at any of these levels can become, in the long run, not a blessing but a curse to oneself and to society, a breeding ground of pride, selfishness, exploitation, violence, on the one hand, and alienation, loneliness, and psychic breakdowns, on the other. These have afflicted societies and civilizations in the past, and led them to decay and death. And modern Western civilization is also facing that challenge today. As our own country also is absorbing the energies of this modern civilization at a fast pace today, and is already experiencing some of its distortions, we shall be wise if we also open ourselves up to the eternal message of our *adhyātmavidyā*, and generate a fresh capital of our spiritual energy resources, with a view to digesting, assimilating, and transforming the physical and mental energy resources of our highly technical age.

VASTU-TANTRA-JNANA *v* PURUSA-TANTRA-JNANA

The modern age demands that we meet the challenges of life with the challenge of an adequate philosophy; that adequacy can be ensured only if that philosophy dares to achieve a happy synthesis between the physical sciences and the science of spirituality. And this is the speciality of our Vedānta among the passing philosophies of the world. 'Philosophy, according to me', says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'is the unified knowledge of both the *kṣetra,* body, and the *kṣetrajña,* the knower of the body.'[24] Vedānta is the only philosophy that is not only unafraid of the advance of scientific knowledge, but also warmly welcomes it. Truth is its passion—*satyameva jayate,* and not any pleasing opinion or dogma. Like modern physical science, Vedānta fosters the critical, inquiring spirit, along with detachment, objectivity, precision, and the challenge of verification. No field of knowledge can foster these intellectual virtues and graces, unless it is on the track of objective truth, and not of personal, subjective fancies.

The limitations of physical science, admitted by many modern scientists themselves, proceed from the adjective, *physical;* but science itself is not limited similarly. It is not limited by, or tied down to, any particular order of facts or subject-matter, as clarified by the biologist, the late Arthur J. Thompson, in his *Introduction to Science.* Any group of facts, he says, can be studied scientifically, and conclusions drawn, if such conclusions follow from a respect for facts, and can face the challenge of verification. Reality may be studied, but not exhausted, by the physical sciences, whose limitations proceed from their dependence entirely on sense-data. This limitation has been pointed out by the mathematician-astronomer, the late Sir Arthur Eddington, thus:

> 'Let us suppose that an ichthyologist is exploring the life of the ocean. He casts a net into the water and brings up a fishy assortment. Surveying his catch, he proceeds, in the usual manner of a scientist, to systematize what it reveals. He arrives at two generalizations:
>
> 1. No sea-creature is less than two inches long;
> 2. All sea-creatures have gills.
>
> These are both true of his catch, and he assumes tentatively that they will remain true however often he repeats it... His generalization is perfectly true of the class of creatures he is talking about—a selected class perhaps, but he would not be interested in making generalizations about any other class.'[25]

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24 क्षेत्र-क्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तत् ज्ञानं मतं मम ।

Gītā, XIII. 2

25 *The Philosophy of Physical Science,* p. 16

Earlier, Eddington had said in his Preface to the above book:

> 'I am not among those who think that, in the search for truth, all aspects of human experience are to be ignored, save those which are followed up in physical science. But I find no disharmony between a philosophy which embraces the wider significance of human experience and the specialized philosophy of physical science, even though the latter relates to a system of thought of recent growth whose stability is yet to be tested.'[26]

When physical science or scientists forget or ignore this limitation implied in the adjective, *physical,* and pronounce judgements on life or reality as a whole, it or they become dogmatic, and forsake truth-seeking; one such dogma that is stifling the spirit of modern science is *materialism,* against which distinguished scientists have protested and warned. After terming materialism *an intruder* earlier in his book *Methods and Results* (Volume I, p. 161), Thomas Huxley, the collaborator of Darwin, repudiates materialism as a philosophy of life (*ibid.,* pp. 164-5):

> 'If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former; and no harm can accrue, so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols...
>
> 'But the man of science, who forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the *x*'s and *y*'s, with which he works his problems, for real entities—and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, *while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyse the energies and destroy the beauty of a life.*' (italics ours)

ADHYATMAVIDYA AS VASTU-TANTRA-JNANA

The scientific characteristic of Vedānta is boldly brought out by Śaṅkarācārya, while presenting the great theme of *Brahmajijñāsā,* inquiry into Brahman, in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras,* and while expounding the scientific frame of mind, in his commentary on the *Gītā.* In the former, he makes a distinction between *vastu-tantra-jñāna,* knowledge depending on, and arising from, the *vastu* or existing reality, and *puruṣa-tantra-jñāna,* knowledge depending on the *puruṣa,* the person, on the moods and fancies and interests of the person concerned. *Vastu-tantra-jñāna* as knowledge of an existing fact is independent of the knowing person; that knowledge is only a *discovery* of the fact, but does not *create* it; whereas, *puruṣa-tantra-jñāna* is knowledge dependent on the person, and is, accordingly, susceptible of being held, altered, or abolished, depending on the person concerned—*kartum, akartum, anyathā-kartum śakyate, puruṣa-tantravāt eva.* There is a vast field of human preferences constituting such *puruṣa-tantra* knowledge, and they have their legitimate role to play in human life. **But God and** soul, as understood in Vedānta, belong to the field of *vastu-tantra* inquiry and knowledge, 'Brahman, immediate and direct, which is the innermost Self of all.'[27] Brahman as the Self of all is an ever-present Reality, as the knower behind all acts of perception and knowledge, whose negation is an impossibility; for it is the very Self of him

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26 ibid., p. ix

27 यत् साक्षात् अपरोक्षात् ब्रह्म, य आत्मा सर्वान्तरः।
Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad, II. iv. 1

who does the negation: *ya eva nirākartā, tasyaiva-ātmatvāt.* This Brahman is not any extra-cosmic deity of the usual run of monotheism, which is a logical postulate, or merely held by faith, but is not capable of verification. But the Brahman of the Upaniṣads, being the Self of all, is the very basis and consummation of experience—*anubhavāvasānatvāt bhūta-vastu-viṣayatvāt ca brahmajñānasya*—'because the knowledge of Brahman is consummated in experience and refers, therefore, to an existing *vastu,* fact'. It is unknown, in the state of spiritual ignorance, but it is not unknowable; for it is the very Self of the knower and, hence, is more intimately known than any sense object. But this knowledge is obstructed and obscured by the self-not-self mix-up in normal experience, calling for a discriminative inquiry.

Being the Self of all, Brahman is *citsvarūpam* and *advitīyam,* of the very nature of consciousness, infinite and non-dual. Says the nuclear physicist Erwin Schrodinger on the nature of consciousness:

> 'Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. ...Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there *is* only one thing and that, what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *Māyā*).'[28]

The sages of the Upaniṣads realized, through a penetrating search, this infinite and immortal Ātman in themselves, behind the ever-changing *kośas* or sheaths of the body, the nervous system, the mind, the intellect, and the ego. Says Yama, the teacher, to Naciketā, the young student:

> 'This Ātman, (being) hidden in all beings, is not manifest to all. But it *can be* realized by all who are trained to inquire into subtle truths, by means of their sharp and subtle *buddhi* or reason.'[29]

The impurities of the mind constitute the obstructions to the knowledge of this ever-present divine immortal dimension of man. These impurities are centred in the ego, in its attachments and aversions and bondage to the organic system. Search for truth, either in the external world which yields pure science, or in the internal world which yields pure spirituality, calls for the elimination of these impurities, which alone gives the mind the power to penetrate from the surface to the depths of nature, external or internal. This is the scientific spirit and temper which is highlighted in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's exhortation to Arjuna in the *Gītā,* and which is amplified in Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the same:

> 'By the delusion of the pairs of opposites arising from attachment and aversion, O descendant of Bharata, all beings are fallen into deep delusion at birth, O scorcher of foes.'
>
> 'But those men of virtuous deeds whose impurities have been destroyed—they, freed from the delusion of the pairs of opposites, worship Me with firm resolve.'[30]

Commenting on the first, Śaṅkarācārya observes:

> 'For it is well known that knowledge of things as they are, even in the external world, cannot rise in the minds of those who are under the thraldom

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28 *What is Life?* Epilogue, pp. 90-1

29 एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढो आत्मा न प्रकाशते ।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्यया बुद्धया सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः ॥
Kaṭha-upaniṣad, III. 12

30 इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।
सर्वभूतानि सम्मोहं सर्गे यान्ति परन्तप ॥
येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।
ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः ॥
Gītā, VII. 27-8

of attachment and aversion; if this is so, what wonder is there that knowledge of the inner Self, which is faced with many obstacles, does not arise in those who are enslaved by them and consequently are deeply deluded! Hence all beings, whose reason is obstructed and deeply deluded by the delusion of these pairs of opposites, do not know Me, who am their very Self, and hence also, they do not worship Me as their own Self.'[31]

Vedanta Philosophy: A Synthesis of Science and Spirituality

In his parting message, on the eve of his departure from this mortal world, given to his disciple Uddhava, Śrī Kṛṣṇa expounds this Indian vision of the unity of the physical sciences ad the science of spirituality, and their joint contribution to total human welfare and fulfilment, in five remarkable verses, which hold a vital lesson for our people today:

> 'In this world, human beings are generally capable of inquiring into the truth of the (external) world; and they uplift themselves (through that) from all sources of *aśubha*, evil.
>
> 'Specially in the case of man (unlike the sub-human species where nature does everything), one's *guru* or guide is, verily, oneself; accordingly, man achieves his development and welfare through the discipline of (his mind) in *pratyakṣa*, direct sense perception, and *anumāna*, inference (inductive and deductive), based on it.
>
> 'In the case of man, moreover, wise men, who have mastered the science and technique of spirituality, *saṅkhya-yoga-viśāradāḥ*, realize clearly, within themselves, Me (the universal Self of all), the unlimited source of all the (limited) energies (in man and nature).
>
> 'Many are the "cities" (bodies or organisms) projected by Me (in evolution)—one-footed, two-footed, three-footed, four-footed, many-footed, and also without any feet. Among all these, the human (organism) is very dear to Me.
>
> '(Because) here (in this human body), yogis seek and realize clearly, through intimations or clues which reason detects in normal human experience, Me, who am the Lord of all and beyond the grasp of (mere) logical inference.'[32]

Culture, civilization, and all forms of political, economic, and social security and freedom and welfare, says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are the products of disciplined human intelligence, backed by faith in himself and faith in the meaningfulness of the universe. Man achieves these through systematic scientific investigations into the external natural and social environments. The same systematic investigation, carried into the inner field of experience, achieves for him spiritual freedom and life fulfilment.

This is the significance of the Vedāntic testament contained in the last verse of the *Gītā*:

> 'Where there is Kṛṣṇa, the Master of Yoga, where there is Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, there (in that society), I am convinced, (dynamic) wealth, victory, general social welfare, and unshakeable justice (shall prevail).'[33]

The Vedānta and Yoga taught in the *Gītā* mark the confluence of two energy streams, namely, the energy of vision and the energy of practical implementation, the energy of meditation and the energy of action. It signifies the confluence of the

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31 न हि इच्छाद्वेषदोषवशीकृतचित्तस्य यथाभूतार्थविषयज्ञानं उत्पद्यते, बहिरपि, किमु वक्तव्यं ताभ्यां आविष्टबुद्धेः संमूढस्य प्रत्यगात्मनि बहुप्रतिबन्धे ज्ञानं न उत्पद्यते इति।...यतः एवं अतः तेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन प्रतिबद्धप्रज्ञानानि सर्वभूतानि सम्मोहितानि मां आत्मभूतं न जानन्ति अत एव आत्मभावेन मां न भजन्ते।

32 *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, XI. vii. 19-23

33 यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम॥

energy of Kṛṣṇa, the unarmed charioteer of Arjuna and the Master of Yoga, and the energy of Arjuna, fully armed for heroic action under the guidance of Kṛṣṇa.

Vedanta and Education of the Complete Man

Vedānta conceives education as the instrument of man's growth in his three dimensions, namely, physical, mental, and spiritual. Such education continues throughout life, unless stagnation sets in at any stage, during or beyond school or university. There is no gulf between secular education and spiritual education, except what one creates through ignorance and complacency and, consequently, reaps as a harvest of stagnation of life-energy at the organic level. It is this stagnation that Vedānta warns against as *saṁsāra*, worldliness. Life in the world, or *saṁsāra*, is not the same as being worldly, or a *saṁsārī*. Live in the world, or *saṁsāra*, says Sri Ramakrishna; there is no harm. But allow not *saṁsāra*, worldliness, to live in you; that will make for life stagnation. A boat will be on the water; that is the right place for the boat. But water should not be *in* the boat; that is the wrong place for the water; it will make the boat unfit for the purpose for which it is meant.

The Phenomenon of Homeostasis in Evolution

Nature has endowed man with the organic capacity to understand the world as well as himself. From the stage of the higher mammals up to man, says biology, nature has been developing and perfecting the mechanism of a built-in equilibrium, thermostatic to begin with and homeostatic later, within the organism itself. Dealing with the evolutionary significance of this mechanism, the Bristol neurologist Grey Walter says:

'The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed, in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. That was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance was that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism —a condition known as homeostasis. *With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself.*'[34] (italics ours)

The Significance of Homeostasis

And quoting the significant words of the great French physiologist Claude Bernard that a *fixed interior milieu is the condition for the free life*, Grey Walter continues:

'Those who had the privilege of sitting under Sir Joseph Barcroft at Cambridge owe much to him for his explanation of this dictum and its application to physiological research. We might otherwise have been scoffers; for "the free life" is not a scientific expression. He translated the saying into simple questions and guided us to the answers. "What has the organism gained," he asked, "by the constancy of temperature, constancy of hydrogen-ion concentration, constancy of water, constancy of sugar, constancy of oxygen, constancy of calcium, and the rest?" With his gift for quantitative expression, it was all in the day's work for him to demonstrate the individual intricacies of the various exquisitely balanced feedback mechanisms. But I recall in his manner a kind of modest trepidation, as if he feared we might ridicule his flight of fancy, when he gave us this illustration of homeostasis and its peculiar virtue:

How often have I watched the ripples on the surface of a still lake made by a passing boat, noted their regularity and admired the patterns formed when two such ripple-systems meet..., *but the lake must be perfectly calm.* ...To look for high intellectual development

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34 *The Living Brain*, p. 16

in a *milieu* whose properties have not become stabilized, is to seek... ripple-patterns on the surface of the stormy Atlantic.'[35]

Homeostasis as a fixed interior *milieu* is not an end in itself. It is just a condition, a necessary condition, for life forging ahead to higher and higher evolutionary levels. And the highest level to be reached is the perfect freedom of the human spirit, by detaching the new significant datum of the self from its organic limitations and making it realize its true nature. Nature has achieved physical homeostasis for man; man has now to achieve for himself, by himself, through the organic capacities which nature has provided him with, a mental homeostasis with a view to realizing the Ātman that is behind the mind. After explaining that, through homeostasis, *'the upper brain is freed from the menial tasks of the body, the regulating functions being delegated to the lower brain'* Grey Walter significantly remarks:

'For mammals all, homeostasis was survival; for man, emancipation.'[36]

Homeostasis v Yoga

And relating this physical homeostasis of organic evolution to the mental and spiritual homeostasis of Yoga, Grey Walter concludes:

'And once again, as new horizons open, we become aware of old landmarks. The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths—nirvana, the abstraction of the Yogi, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided "happiness that lies within"; *it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.*'[37] (italics ours)

The struggle to go beyond organic pulls and limitations, and realize the freedom of the spirit in Self-realization, needs to be supported and sustained by a stable moral life; only when this base is secured can man carry forward the struggle direct into the inner world and fashion relevant disciplines and forge newer instruments out of his psycho-physical energy system, among which a tough *manas* and a pure *buddhi* are the most important. This results in a second homeostasis, which is acquired by man himself with the help of his higher brain after freeing it from thraldom to the organic system, and which is comprehensively called, in Vedānta and Yoga, *śama* and *dama,* discipline of the mind and discipline of the sense organs.

The Nature of Yoga

The state in which the mind succeeds in stilling the clamour of the sense organs and itself becomes pure, steady, and still is called Yoga. This is the inner condition which spiritual seekers down the ages have striven to attain, and which many have attained, and in which many have realized God, the innermost Self of all, as affirmed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

'Freed from attachment, fear, and anger, absorbed in Me (the One Self in all), and taking refuge in Me, very many people, purified by the *tapas* of *jñāna,* discipline of spiritual knowledge, have attained to oneness with Me.'[38]

The same truth is also affirmed by Gauḍapāda in his commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad*:

'This transcendental non-dual state, in

35 ibid., pp. 16-17

36 ibid., p. 18

37 ibid., p. 19

38 वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥
Gītā, IV. 10

which relative existence is overcome, has been attained by sages who were free from attachment, fear, and anger, and had gone beyond (the mandate of) the Vedas (i.e., of all scriptures, in view of their entering the field of *experiment*, and getting the *experience*, of spirituality).'[39]

From the time of the Upaniṣads, about four thousand years ago, and probably even earlier, our country has developed a full-fledged science and technique of this subject, the subject of Yoga. In the words of Yama in his teaching to the boy Naciketā:

> 'When the five sense organs of knowledge remain steady, along with the *manas*, and even the *buddhi* does not act—that is the supreme state, say (the sages). They (the sages) consider that (state) as Yoga.'[40]

The Sthitaprajna of the Gita

This results in the conversion of the inner life of man into a unique 'laboratory' for a mighty experiment and experience—the experience of his infinite and immortal nature. The picture of man, full and tranquil within and spiritually free, as a result of the knowledge of his true nature as the Ātman, which is, in the words of Śaṅkarācārya, *śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva*, ever pure, ever awakened, ever free by nature, as a result of which he ceases to be a slave of his organic system, as all other organisms in nature are, has been graphically drawn in many passages in India's rich spiritual and even secular literature. The following three verses of the *Gītā*, in the course of its inspiring description of a *sthita-prajña*, man of steady wisdom, are typical of all such:

> 'The disciplined man, with the senses under his control, and free from attachment and aversion, verily attains tranquillity, (even while) moving freely among the sense objects with his sense organs.'
>
> 'In the case of him whose mind follows (helplessly) in the wake of his wandering senses, his wisdom also is carried away, like a ship (being carried away helplessly) by a gale on the ocean.'
>
> 'As into the ocean, brimful and still, flow the waters (of mighty rivers, without distrubing its stillness), even so do all desires enter into the sage. Such a one attains peace, and not the one who runs after desires.'[41]

Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira in the *Mahābhārata* that as man, the known, is subject to mortality, man, the unknown, is the focus of immortality:

> 'Immortality as well as mortality are both present within the body (of every one). By (the pursuit of) delusion, one attains mortality. By (the pursuit of) truth, one attains immortality.'[42]

The Inter-relationship of Science and Spirituality in the Indian Context

With this impressive national background of philosophical thought on the

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39 वीतरागभयक्रोधैः मुनिभिर्वेदपारगैः ।
निर्विकल्पो ह्ययं दृष्टः प्रपञ्चोपशमोऽद्वयः ।।
Māṇḍūkya-kārika, II. 35

40 यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम् ।।
Kaṭha-upaniṣad, VI. 10-11

41 रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ।।
इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।
तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नाविमिवांभसि ।।
आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं
समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।
तद्वत् कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे
स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ।।
II. 64, 67, 70

42 अमृतं चैव मृत्युश्च द्वयं देहे प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
मृत्युरापद्यते मोहात् सत्येनापद्यतेऽमृतम् ।।
'Śānti-parvan', X. 169.28 (Bhandarkar Edition)

one hand, and shining spiritual examples on the other, the relationship between science and spirituality is going to be far different in the Indian context from the mutually hostile and unhappy and, consequently, mutually weakening relationship that existed, and still exists between the two in the West, and that unfortunately dominates the understanding and thinking due to the passing exigencies of Western dominance, of many of the educated men and women of our own country. There are indications that the higher reaches of modern Western science, and certainly some outstanding Western scientists, are getting faint glimpses of the spiritual dimensions of the human personality. The concept of psycho-social evolution in twentieth-century biology raises evolution from the organic to the spiritual level, at the human stage. What biology calls psycho-social evolution is what Vedānta would call the early stages of man's spiritual growth, *Ātmavikāsa,* of which ethical awareness, concern for other human and all living beings, and the spirit of love, dedication, and service, are but by-products. Man ensures his spiritual growth by cultivating a spirit of love, dedication, and service in the outer field of action, and meditation and its allied processes in the inner field. This is the Yoga of the *Gītā,* which is defined by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the second chapter both as *samatvam* and *karmasu kauśalam. Samatvam* is the second homeostasis to be achieved by man himself, as referred to earlier. *Kauśalam* in *karma,* dexterity or efficiency in action, refers to both productive social efficiency outside, which is much emphasized in modern technical civilization, and spiritual personality efficiency within, which this civilization largely neglects and of which it knows also very little. The chariot imagery in the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* presents man's psycho-physical organism as an efficient instrument which, if left to itself and unintegrated, will land man in disaster, but which, if kept trim and integrated under *buddhi,* enlightened Reason, will take him to all-round life fulfilment.

Clear thinking is the characteristic of Vedānta and modern science; *vastu svarūpaṁ sphuṭa-bodha-cakṣuṣā svenaiva vedyam*—'the truth of the Ātman as a *vastu,* fact, is to be known by each one by himself or herself, through *sphuṭa-bodha-cakṣu,* clear eye of understanding or reason', says Śaṅkarācārya in his *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi.* Modern environmental and ecological problems may be making for the unpopularity of technology, or of over-technology. But pure science will always remain as one of the noblest pursuits of man. And we need more and more of this discipline; and we need more and more of the science of spirituality. Even a little spiritual growth will enrich man, steady his character, make him strong and fearless, and integrate him with other men in society. With respect both to science and spirituality, it is not a question of everything or nothing; even a little growth in scientific attitude and temper, and in spirituality, will make a vast difference in the creative and positive energy resources in a man or in a society. That is the meaning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's emphasis on this truth in verse 40 of the second chapter of the *Gītā*:

Svalpam-apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt—'Even a little of this *dharma* will save (man) from great fear.'

Conclusion

When our nation awakens to this truth, our people will learn to substitute self-discipline for the imposed discipline given to us by the present National Emergency, which is a blessing only in the short run. This awakening, followed by the march to the nation's appointed destiny, is the

message of the clarion call of the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*: *Uttiṣṭhata! Jāgrata! prāpya varān nibodhata,* which, as freely rendered by the modern sage, Swami Vivekananda, can provide the stimulus and the inspiration to our nation and the rest of the world to march onward with steady steps and firm mind: Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

(Concluded)

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

HOW TO WORK FOR UNITY, HARMONY AND PEACE ANYWHERE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

In the *Kosambiya-sutta,* occurring in a Buddhist scripture, we read:

> 'Once when the Blessed One [the Buddha] happened to visit Kosambi, he learnt about disputes prevailing among the bhikkhus [monks] of that locality. He called the disputing bhikkhus to his presence and addressed them thus:
>
> 'Bhikkhus, you are disputing among yourselves and hurling taunts at one another, because you do not seem to know the states of consciousness which lead to harmony and peace.
>
> 'Bhikkhus, there are six states of consciousness which conduce to unity and harmony, [and which express themselves through the following]:
>
> 1. Acts of goodwill towards fellow beings.
> 2. Words of goodwill sincerely spoken.
> 3. Thoughts of goodwill sincerely harboured.
> 4. Sharing with others of all that you have, down to the last crumb of bread.
> 5. Sharing with others your higher life of flawless virtue.
> 6. Removing all evil around you with the noble saving creed of love.
>
> 'These are the [expressions of] six states of consciousness which, being in themselves friendly and respectful, lead to accord, amity and love.
>
> 'Listen, bhikkhus, these six states of consciousness lead to super-knowledge. Each of these leads successively a step further; and while there is something further to be done let there be no falling back in your steps.'

I

These teachings of the Buddha have an urgent message for all of us, in all possible personal, social, national, or international contexts.

There is so much dissension in the world at various levels—so much of ill will and interpersonal, inter-racial, and intergroup fights—that a tremendous amount of human energy and material resources is just wasted, leaving the world in increased agony and confusion.

But it need not necessarily be so.

The state of the world in which we live intimately affects our individual lives. If there is a war anywhere in the world, then your morning cup of tea or coffee may be adversely affected, though you yourself may not go to war. Again, the states of consciousness in which we individually live and function, have a part in moulding and shaping the state of the world in which we

live. It has been truly said that 'wars start in the minds of men'.

To be sure, most of us do not like to be bothered by the state of the world, assuming that it is none of a little man's concern. 'If the world is going to pieces, I just cannot do anything about it'—this is the general attitude.

Again, some of us have not the broad-mindedness or farsightedness to think and feel for the rest of mankind. Such among us think that the world exists for us and not we for the world.

In any case, whatever the type of mind we may have, all of us have some common aspirations. We all want to live, grow and have self-fulfilment according to our understanding. These common aspirations of mankind clearly cannot be fulfilled unless there is a modicum of unity and harmony in the world.

Now, how can there possibly be unity and harmony, or any kind of peace in the world, if these do not prevail at home, between neighbours, between fellow human beings, between different religions, races, and political persuasions? In a very real sense, therefore, living in such ways—doing such things—as are conducive to unity, peace and harmony, is a personal responsibility of every normal human being.

It will however be wrong to suggest that there is not this awareness among some persons at least—that at least some feel the urgent need for working for unity, peace and harmony. But then, very few seem to have ever known—much less applied—the right methods for the purpose.

Oftentimes in our very efforts for peace and harmony, seeds of dissension lie hidden. Most of us seek peace on our own terms: not in terms of peace itself, but of our own interests. In such seeking, motivated by selfishness, seeds of dissension lie hidden. We seek peace in a way which destroys even the hope of peace, not because we have no desire for peace but because we do not know what is needed to achieve it. Hence we must humbly learn from those who know what it really demands to work 'for peace'.

The Buddha's teachings on how to work thus for unity and harmony are basic and sound. And they seem to have been the first universally applicable principles laid before mankind. Even today, it would appear that no better set of methods has ever been taught. They are simple and psychologically oriented; and like all great truths can be understood by all and practised by all. Indeed the very simplicity of his methods tends to hide their profundity and far-reaching significance.

According to the Buddha, peace and harmony are not the outcome of certain measures we may adopt, but of the state of consciousness with which we function in the world.

Buddha teaches that there are six states of consciousness which are conducive to unity and harmony. Being in themselves of the nature of friendship and respect, these states lead to accord and love.

II

We shall now study in detail these six states of consciousness and delve into their implications for peace and harmony. Unless the text, from which the teachings are quoted is really inaccurate, one must assume that the Buddha had his reasons for detailing the order of the 'six states of Consciousness' in the way given above. But, for the convenience of our understanding and exposition, we are taking up the 'six states of Consciousness' in the text in following order: 3, 2, 1, 4, 5, 6.

Accordingly we shall first try to understand the state of consciousness manifesting as 'thoughts of goodwill sincerely harboured'.

If it is true that wars start in the minds of men, it is also true that peace is born first in the minds of men. Thoughts lead to things. If you have the thought of destroying an enemy, you will find your arsenals filling up with destructive missiles. If you have the thoughts and feelings of sencere, unselfish love for human beings, you are ready to sacrifice yourself for others. In the one case you become a killer, in the other you become an oblation.

The most basic work for unity and harmony has to be done in one's own thought processes. Do we really want peace? If we want peace at home and harmony in the world, in the first place we must have peaceful thoughts in ourselves. We must wish everybody well. Thoughts of goodwill must be sincerely harboured.

But these thoughts, to be really effective, must be thoughts of universal goodwill. Otherwise they remain qualified—often nullified—by thoughts of ill will.

All of us undoubtedly have some thoughts of goodwill; but in most of us these are only for those whom we consider our own, our friends, who share our opinions, serve our interests. But along with these thoughts, we have also plenty of ill will for those opposed to us, whom we consider our enemies. We do not hesitate even to wish hell for them—of course with rigorous rationalization thereof!

When we have these thoughts of goodwill for friends and ill will for enemies, these will largely, perhaps entirely neutralize each other. Thus it turns out that even the good thoughts for our friends remain sterile. If Christ had loved only his disciples and not also his tormentors, he would have remained merely the leader of a few nondescript Galileans.

Then alone will we be harbouring thoughts of goodwill effectively, when in our minds there remains not a trace of ill will for anyone in the world, no matter what our sufferings.

We must understand that there is nothing like a just or justifiable ill will in this world. Of course we often do feel, 'This man has done me so much wrong: he deserves to be hated.' This is a very common but harmful way of thinking. Whatever may be the reason for harbouring hatred or ill will, hatred when harboured will cause us pain and suffering. Hatred always does deeper harm to the person who hates than to the one who is hated; for hatred destroys auspicious qualities in the hater, and thus he is spiritually injured.

Thus knowing full well what happens to us if we for any reason harbour hatred or ill will, we must root out all of it.

In the *Dhammapada,* the famous Buddhist scripture, is very clearly indicated what happens to us when we harbour any evil thought—what to speak of hatred or ill will—and also what are the effects when we refrain from harbouring such thought:

> 'All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the wagon.
>
> 'All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.'[1]

As we all intend to avoid pain, and desire happiness, we should always remember these two timeless truths.

And for the removal of evil thoughts, hatred, which is more basic, must be expunged from minds. The way is here, as the Buddha proceeds to teach:

> ' "He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me,"—in those who harbour such thoughts hatred will never cease.
>
> ' "He abused me, he beat me, he de-

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1 *Dhammapada,* verses 1, 2

feated me, he robbed me,"—in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred will cease.

'For never does hatred cease by hatred here below: hatred ceases by love; this is an eternal law.'[2]

Only to the degree that the mind is freed from hatred, can thoughts of goodwill have any chance of being sincerely harboured.

But even absence of hatred—though a great achievement—will not be enough for creative work for peace and harmony A positive and powerful thought-force of good will for the entire world must be generated in the mind—enough to withstand all contrary forces and also to grow.

How can this be done?

In the famous Buddhist scripture, *Suttanipāta,* there is a sermon of the Buddha called the 'Metta-sutta' in which the method given for cultivating universal goodwill and friendship is especially pertinent:

'May all beings be happy and secure, may they be happy-minded.

'Whatever living beings there are, either feeble or strong, all either long or great, middle-sized, short, small or large, either seen or which are not seen, and which live far (or) near, either born or seeking birth, may all creatures be happy-minded.

'Let no one deceive another, let him not despise (another) in any place, let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another.

'As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child, so also let every one cultivate a boundless (friendly) mind towards all beings.

'And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity.

'Standing, walking or sitting or lying, as long as he is awake, let him devote himself to this mind; this (way of) living they say is the best in this world.'

This is what it means to sincerely and creatively cultivate and harbour thoughts of goodwill.

But for us spiritual seekers, we will find that our thought process will be powerfully helped by the repetition of the two following prayers, and thoughtfully reflecting on them. First is the Vedic prayer, known as the *Gayatrī*: 'We meditate upon that adorable effulgence of the resplendent divine Being, the Giver of all light; may He guide our intellects.' The second is the well-known Sanskrit prayer of universal goodwill:

'May all be freed from dangers. May all realize what is good. May all be actuated by noble thoughts. May all rejoice everywhere,

'May all be happy. May all be free from disease. May all realize what is good. May none be subject to misery.

'May the wicked become virtuous. May the virtuous attain tranquillity. May the tranquil be free from bonds. May the freed make others free.

'May good betide all people. May the sovereign rule the earth, following the righteous path. May all beings ever attain what is good. May the worlds be prosperous and happy.

'May the clouds pour rain in time. May the earth be blessed with crops. May this our country be free from calamity. May holy men live without fear.'

If our own intellects are divinely guided, and if we can sincerely desire for all people all forms of good, that will at least have a therapeutic effect on our own minds. And it will also help create an atmosphere for peace and harmony to thrive.

When such thoughts of goodwill, through regular practice, become involuntary movements of our mind, we can feel within ourselves a growing power of goodness, which on the one hand soothes us inwardly, and on the other, soothes all those who come in touch with us. We become then a force for peace.

(*To be concluded*)

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[2] ibid., 3-5



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOHAMMED

> 'Little men like you and me are simply the recipients of just a little energy. A few minutes, a few hours, a few years at best, are enough to spend it all, to stretch it out, as it were, to its fullest strength, and then we are gone forever. But mark this giant that came; centuries and ages pass, yet the energy that he left upon the world is not yet stretched, nor yet expanded to its full. It goes on adding new vigour as the ages roll on.'[1]

Swami Vivekananda of course spoke these words about Christ the Messenger. But who can doubt their full applicability to that Messenger of Islam who himself so greatly reverenced the Christ?

Moreover, in the case of Mohammed, the sources of that energy that he left upon the world—his sayings and doings—are more surely known to history than those of any other Founder of a great living religion. Nor is this due merely to his rather recent dates: it seems evident that much of it is due to the Prophet's own vital interest in history, as expression of God's will. Although it is possible that Moses had a similar interest, his early era has left rather few details for us; Confucius may be closer to us in time, but his tolerant sense of detachment seems to have prevented intense involvement in historical changes. Clearly, the Vedic sages, the Buddha, Lao-tze, and Christ were so deeply imbued with the sense of the timeless that their day-to-day actions have assumed relatively little importance, even though the great and glorious outlines remain undimmed by time.

To be sure, the long years of struggle, outer and inner, which led up to the series of revelations establishing Mohammed as a Messenger of God are largely hidden, as with all other great Messengers except for Sri Ramakrishna in our own times. But thenceforward his followers seem from the start to have taken careful note of his actions, great and small. And they soon began to mould their own lives similarly. Though we do not know whether the Prophet himself encouraged this tendency —and his innate humility makes it unlikely that he did, except insofar as he saw God's will in it—certainly it grew even more spectacularly after his death. As an impartial Christian observer writes:

> ...his actions, his daily routine down to the minutest detail... [how] he washed his hands, how he combed his beard, his likes and dislikes—all were considered important and became a pattern for the life of the faithful Muslim. To imi-

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[1] Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. IV (1962), pp. 138-9

> tate the prophet was the highest goal piety could aim at... A whole system of thought sprang up, known as the *Sunna*: the way of life of the prophet which became the life of Islam.'[2]

Indeed it is easy to see how this Prophet —whose humility succeeded where no other founder of a great living Religion could succeed, in permanently quashing all attempts to make him a God—simply had to accept the practical value of this sort of imitation. Doubtless he glimpsed what had long ago been so well put, in the *Mahabharata*: 'By argument nothing can be settled; doctrines there are many; various are the scriptures... There are not two sages who do not differ in their opinions. The secret of religion is buried deep, as it were, in dark caves. So the path to be followed is that which the great ones have trodden.' Again, his martial temperament would have thrilled to James Russell Lowell's sombre lines:

> 'By the light of burning martyrs
> Christ, thy bleeding steps we track,
> Toiling up new Calvaries ever
> With the Cross that turns not back.'

Yet, these very lines epitomize the need for accuracy in the concept of greatness to be imitated or followed. Perhaps no great man ever has had his image, his 'footsteps', so distorted as has the Nazarene: indeed his agony at Golgotha was only the foretaste of the text-torturing which leaves us in despair of glimpsing him. As Vivekananda exclaims: 'I do not know what he was or what he was not! One would make him a great politician; another,... a great military general; another, a great patriotic Jew... The best commentary on the life of a great teacher is his own life.'[3] Nothing but the inconceivable Power of the Christ could have kept alive those of His sayings and doings which still suffice to uplift millions.

Indeed, since Mohammed is said never to have obtained more than a rudimentary picture of Christianity—whose full message would surely have mightily attracted him —he must have thought long over the problem. In any case, we do not hear of his discouraging those who would follow his footsteps; rather he proceeded to set before his followers and thus before the world, an Image truly worth imitating—of the order of Vivekananda's description in the Messengers: 'These are verily gigantic, their shadows covering the earth—they stand undying, eternal!'

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Thus, as one keenly aware of the crying need of the people for something they *could* imitate, the Prophet seems to have followed a middle path both in his teachings and in his life. As the noted historian Will Durant observes, 'The inevitable gap between theory and practice seems narrower in Islam than in other faiths.'[4] Though the life of complete external renunciation is doubtless the highest, yet how many at any given epoch, are able to follow it? Then what of the Arabia of those days, thousands of years 'behind' our progressive nations? Thus, such a life was sure to be put on a shelf beyond all except lip-service—if indeed it were not somehow warped into a worldly mould! Even those saints who seriously tried the Imitation of Christ, could hardly dare *imitate* Him who was God to them: at most they might follow at a respectful distance.

Thus the tremendous appeal of the 'religion of naturalness' (*dīn-i-fitrat*) down to the present day.

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[2] Erich W. Bethmann: *Bridge to Islam* (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1953), p. 38

[3] ibid., p. 145

[4] Will Durant: *The Story of Civilization*: (Simon & Schuster, New York), Vol. IV (1950), p. 183

To us, of course, the most conspicuous aspect of this approach was the Prophet's 'polygamy'. To most Christians this has been at best a matter for ridicule; at worst, for hellfire. But Vivekananda turns the laugh acutely on us: 'Great men may marry two hundred wives each. "Giants" like you, I would not allow to marry one wife.' Arabia was then polygamous and amoral beyond belief: thus to limit the number of wives, and set up strict, even Puritan, standards for extra-marital conduct, was a large step ahead. Further, Mohammed was true to his first wife all twenty-six years till her death, his later marriages being apparently due either to need for a son and heir or to establishing friendly relations with other countries. And as it is commonly noted that the wife can be one's severest critic, knowing one's every weakness, it is no small tribute to the Prophet that his wife was his first and most loyal convert.

Clearly, the 'imitation of Mohammed' thus at once became more natural and factual, since it could extend into the day-to-day graces of family life. To quote our historian:

> 'Twice in the Koran he [Mohammed] reminded Moslems that their mothers had carried them with pain, brought them forth with pain, nursed them for twenty-four or thirty months. "Paradise," he said, "is at the foot of the mother."' '...when they [women] came to his services he treated them kindly, even if they brought suckling babes; if, says an amiable tradition, he heard a child cry, he would shorten his sermon lest the mother be inconvenienced.' [5]

Here we come on a striking example of the Prophet's natural austerity as well as democratic leanings. Ruler of an expanding kingdom, one would expect that he would keep at least his family in luxury. But all agree that he 'refused to indulge the extravagance of his wives... and for a time he dutifully spent a night with each of them in rotation; the master of Arabia had no apartment of his own.' He is said to have been the only monarch who never lived in a palace!

> 'He was often seen mending his clothes or shoes, kindling the fire, sweeping the floor, milking the family goat in his yard, or shopping for provisions in the market. His staple foods were dates and barley bread, milk and honey were occasional luxuries; and he obeyed his own interdiction of wine... He visited the sick, and joined any funeral procession that he met. He... accepted the invitation of a slave to dinner, and asked no service of a slave that he had time and strength to do for himself.' [6]

We can thus glimpse how the Prophet and his followers—despite countless calumniators—greatly and permanently raised the status of the poor and oppressed, especially women, children and slaves, in his own land and from thence abroad. We cannot here go into the mechanisms, even the theological dicta, which implemented all this; but simply the repercussions of his one life, overflowing with sympathy, and at a level of intensity 'verily gigantic'.

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The deeper and more the detail in which it is studied, the more the Prophet's life reveals the middle path, the balance which is such a clue to greatness. He was surrounded by men of terribly volatile natures, loving anger, jealousy, revenge *for their own sake*. 'And when he (the Arab) could find no enemy to deal with, he found an outlet for his irresistible urge for fighting

5 ibid., pp. 182, 180

6 ibid., pp. 172-3

in attacking his own people...even if the victim be a brother!' 'Blood called for blood, and a blood-feud could last for forty years.'[7] Yet, born into this society, the Prophet is repeatedly said *never* to have lost his temper! And if certain acts of administering justice could be warped by some into some version of 'revenge', the overwhelming impression among friends and foes alike, was Mohammed's capacity for forgiveness. One instance among many:

> 'Once, while he was sleeping alone at the foot of a tree, he was suddenly awakened by a noise and beheld Durther, a hostile warrior, standing over him with a drawn sword. "O Mohammed", cried he, "who is there now to save thee?" "God!" replied the prophet. The wild Bedouin was suddenly awed and dropped his sword which was instantly seized by Mohammed... "Who is there now to save thee, O Durther?" "Alas, no one." ... "Then learn from me to be merciful." So saying, he returned his sword.'

And greatness is no less seen—and should be more readily imitated—in little things. Times without number, surrounded by reckless hot words and hotter deeds, he swallowed insults which any other would have answered in kind: he was simply too *big* to give them much thought. More—he often had to restrain loyal friends from killing such offenders on the spot! Even when his beloved wife was falsely accused of unfaithfulness, Mohammed refused to disclose the name of the fabricator, to save him from sure death at the hands of good Moslems.

Similarly on the grand scale: as head of a growing empire, the Prophet again and again showed unheard-of mercy to his enemies—often to the temporary despair of his friends. Perhaps best known is his triumphant re-entry into Mecca after eight years' exile in Medina and countless brutalities to himself and his people. The Meccans could hope for little but death—thousands of them—though they had heard rumours of the Prophet's generosity. But the outcome was still beyond belief: only the four worst offenders were put to death; the rest, men and women alike, were given complete amnesty. Among the women, one in particular had worked and plotted ceaselessly against the new creed, among other things having torn out the liver of Mohammed's uncle after his barbarous murder, and chewed it up! Though even the Prophet could not well forget this crime, he yet spoke gently to her when she trembling was brought before him; he said not a word about his past sufferings. Overwhelmed, she exclaimed, 'Never was a camp more hateful in my eyes than yours; and today none is more beloved and beautiful...'[8]

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Incomprehensible as it is to us outsiders, that word 'gentle' is used again and again by those who knew the Prophet most closely. One is inevitably reminded of the beautiful saying of the poet Bhavabhuti about the nature of great souls, 'harder than adamant yet softer than a flower'. Master of erupting legions of the most successful fighters in history—still, his very mastery rested on a deep calmness, a balance of mind which seemed unshakeable. Fully aware of being just an instrument in God's hands, he used violence when and if it had to be used; but not an instant longer. Far above and ahead of his followers, he saw clearly the vital power of the Ideal, of Truth itself.

Here, if anywhere, one might say Mohammed left the middle path. Truthfulness was

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[7] Afzal Iqbal: *The Prophet's Diplomacy* (Claude Stark & Co., Cape Cod, Mass., 02670, U.S.A., 1975), pp. 16-17

[8] ibid., p. 38

the bed-rock of his life and of his creed: we find no serious doubt of this great fact in reputable accounts. First as business-man, then warrior, then ruler and diplomat, he moved through areas where truthfulness seemed hopelessly impractical in any society—what to speak of that one! But not for him. Even by age 25, still merely a sturdy camel-driver, he became commonly known as 'El Amin', the Trustworthy; and through his long years in full public gaze this term only took on deeper meaning.

One spectacular instance seems to reveal a detachment almost inhuman till one recalls the Prophet's great love for his friends. He had laboriously negotiated a treaty with Mecca, during his exile in Medina, though his followers quite reasonably found it a series of concessions! Most galling was the obligation on Moslems to return to Mecca any escapees, but no reciprocal obligation on the Meccans. And sure enough, soon a young man, son of a leading Meccan but a recent convert to Islam, managed somehow to escape. His chains still hanging on him, covered with bruises and scars from his former friends, he entered the Moslem camp and fell at the Prophet's feet begging asylum. When Mohammed referred to his pledged word making this impossible, even his most loyal friends and councillors were shocked. Could any human being, they protested, send this faithful convert back to new tortures? More—as the youth himself shrieked out, 'Am I to be returned to the polytheists that they may entice me from my religion?' As it happened, his own father was present, as envoy from Mecca; when he sternly demanded his son's return, one Moslem chief quietly offered the son his sword with which to kill his father on the spot! But the Prophet calmed him: 'Be patient and control yourself, for God will provide relief and a means of escape for you... We have made peace with them, we and they have invoked God in our agreement, and we cannot deal falsely with them.'[9]

And in fact that young man did not only survive, back in Mecca among persecutors, but even became a centre of further spread of Islam there! This however is not the point: whether or not the Prophet's vision extended thus far, his friends and foes alike could see nothing but visionary unreality therein. Already feeling that the 'Treaty' was defeatism, the Moslems had silently to watch an innocent brother returned to tormentors. It was an awesome test of their loyalty, and it would surely have failed had they not known their leader's compassion for others' suffering and indifference to his own. His heart bled for the victim; yet he had himself faced still greater terrors for the sake of Truth. For how many years had he been shunned, threatened, hunted, risking torture and death, for that Voice which led him on for the sake of his people and his God. How often he could have saved himself by watering down the Message *just a little*! But that would not have been Truth.

So, when all the struggles and sacrifices were past and death approaching, a touching scene illumines this facet of greatness. Surrounded by friends and neighbours, the Prophet said, 'Moslems, if I have wronged anyone of you, here I am to answer for it. If I owe aught to anyone, all I may happen to possess belongs to you.' One man stood up and demanded three crowns which he had once given a poor man at the request of the Prophet, which was immediately repaid. 'Better to blush in this world than the next', he added. How close to the great Greek, whose only regret in his final hour was, 'I owe a cock to Asclepius...'

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9 ibid., p. 32

So to the last glimpse of the mighty 'image' set up for his followers by this Prophet who abhorred *all* images. What seems to have struck deepest those around him was simply, his lovableness. Our historian says, 'His friends loved him to idolatry'; and H. G. Wells, an often-unkind critic, admits, '...those who knew Mohammed best believed in him most.' Here is a hint of what they saw—from his own adopted son:

> '...of middle stature, neither tall nor short. His complexion was rosy white; his eyes black; his hair, thick, brilliant and beautiful, fell to his shoulders. His profuse beard fell to his breast... There was such sweetness in his visage that no one, once in his presence, could leave him. If I hungered, a single look at the Prophet's face dispelled the hunger. Before him all forgot their griefs and pains.'[10]

As Sister Nivedita observes, 'There is nothing in the world so passionately tender as a Hindu mother, unless it be a Mohamedan father.' And in the Prophet's lifetime as well as beyond it, all of Islam were in a real sense his children as well as his disciples.

One of the Prophet's lovable qualities that especially attracts us who picture him only as the Conqueror, is his humility. Not mere modesty—something external—that would have worn thin rapidly in the blaze of public life with free access to all comers. He was simply *not happy* when being praised; he simply *liked* the free and the slave, the rich and poor alike, and often a bit more the latter, since they had less to hide. He even went so far as to include in the holy Koran a direct reproof to himself from God, because he had ignored a poor blind supplicant who had unwittingly approached him amidst a group of envoys! As his fame spread, examples of this humility tended of course to multiply; and here his keen sense of fun (so regretfully missing, perhaps expurgated, from the Judeo-Christian tradition) used to shine through his usual dignity. Once he reassured a visitor, trembling in awe of his personality: 'I am not a king. I am the son of an ordinary woman... who used to eat dry meat.' To one who addressed him as 'Our Lord, the best among us...' he replied: 'Do not be led astray by Satan: I am Mohammed the son of 'Abdullah, the servant and Apostle of God. Do not add a bit to the dignity that I have been given by God.' On the day his only son died, there chanced to be a solar eclipse: his followers began saying it was a sign of God's condolence—but the Prophet promptly dispelled this idea, as he did all attempts to attribute miraculous powers or help to himself.

Indeed this humility was seen in his every movement. He not only avoided taking precedence over others, choosing always the least conspicuous seats, but so natural was this tendency that he was often unrecognized in groups. Strangers coming from far to pay him homage had often to ask who and where was the Prophet, when they entered his own mosque! Full of little helpfulnesses to others without thought of return, he yet showed gratitude for the least favour done to himself. Even his capacity for forgiveness must have sprung from this humility: what had *he* to forgive—he who was assured that God was all and he only His servant? So '...he never talked ill, he never picked holes (in others) and he never talked scandal. He talked only on subjects which could lead to some useful results.' No wonder people loved him.

Since all love in this world is reciprocal, it follows that the Prophet's capacity for love was boundless—springing as Nivedita well says, from a 'burning love of God'

10 Durant, op. cit., p. 163

which 'found no adequate expression save in the love and service of man.' One expression—perhaps most tangible to his friends and followers through heroic trials—was his loyalty to his friends. Of course he had basically only one loyalty and that was to God and His law. But, theology aside, he seems clearly to have arrived at an assurance of God's working through human beings—even through all beings—which brought into harmony his varied earthly loyalties. As we have seen, he sometimes had to follow God despite anguished cries from his dearest and most trusted: he had to keep the means right and leave the ends with the Lord. And clearly the Lord was loyal to him: witness the results in terms of human welfare over vast areas which he never himself saw. 'He succeeded more completely than any other reformer', concludes our eminent historian.

So we may close with a memorable example of the Prophet's ability to lift a sharp conflict of loyalties up to the level of the Ideal. After a great victory (at Hunayn), having shocked his followers by granting freedom to *all* captives, he proceeded to distribute the booty mostly to his recently-converted Meccan followers rather than his good friends of years' shared hardship. Soon firebrands among the latter began whispering that after all the Prophet was himself a Meccan, and now was becoming soft towards his kith and kin! The story grew till actual mutiny seemed threatening. Summoning the disaffected men (of the group known as the Ansar) Mohammed addressed them gravely, slowly:

> 'Did I not come to you when you were erring, and God guided you? Did I not come to you when you were poor and God made you rich?...
> 'No, had you so wished you could have said with legitimate pride, "Mohammed came to us discredited and we believed in him; we gave him shelter and refuge when his own kith and kin deserted him... when he came to us as a helpless man..." Had you given me these answers you would have spoken the truth.
> 'Are you now disturbed because of the good things of this life by which I win over a people that they may become Muslims while I entrust Islam to you? Are you not satisfied that men should take away flocks and herds while you take back with you the Apostle of God?... If all men went one way and the Ansar another, I should take the way of the Ansar. O God, have mercy on the Ansar, their sons, and their sons' sons!'[11]

It is recorded that many a grey beard among the Ansar became wet, many a throat choked with emotion. And the whole threatened catastrophe ended there. Even now, though thirteen and a half centuries have rolled on, do we not also glimpse that 'the energy that he left upon the world' is indeed still ample to strengthen our own steps, give us a push forward and upward?

[11] Iqbal, op. cit., p. 42

ABROAD IN AMERICA—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

PROF. C. B. TRIPATHI

> Asia laid the germs of civilization, Europe developed man, and America is developing women and the masses.... The Americans are fast becoming liberal ... and this great nation is progressing fast towards that spirituality which was the standard boast of the Hindus.
>
> —Letter written from Chicago, November 1893

[In commemoration of the Bicentennial of American Independence, the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, has published a volume entitled *Abroad in America,* containing twenty-nine articles which, in the words of the Director, highlight '...the observations of European, South American, Asian, and African visitors to the United States during the first century-and-a-half of its existence as a nation.' Naturally the selection has been representative, and Swami Vivekananda alone has been chosen from India—from among its distinguished group of visitors to the U.S.A. during this long period. With the kind permission of the Editor of this volume, we reprint below the article on Swami Vivekananda by Prof. C. B. Tripathi. In the original, the article has been suitably and beautifully illustrated.

Writing within limits imposed by considerations of space, Prof. Tripathi, broadly speaking, has done a fine a job. While presenting the Swami's observations and reflections on American life and society, mainly drawn from his letters, the author also gives the essential biographical details. Prof. Tripathi is Professor of History at the University of Allahabad, and is currently in the U.S. on a Senior Fulbright Hays Award.

We hope that our readers will appreciate the reprinting of this article in this particular issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata,* as the month of July is associated with the American Independence as well as with Vivekananda's final departure from this world. —*Ed.*]

Among the international delegates to the Parliament of Religions which convened at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 was a Hindu monk, Swami Vivekananda, from India. At this exposition, the Swami charmed audiences with his magical oratory, and left an indelible mark on America's spiritual development. He remained in the United States for about three years [on this visit], moving from one part of the country to the other with his message of universal love, and won a number of disciples. Completely engrossed in his mission, he never cared to write any consistent account of his experiences; but he did write a number of letters to his friends and disciples in India in which he freely expressed his views on American society.

This saint-philosopher was born Narendranatha Dutta, in 1863, to an aristocratic family. His father, an attorney at Calcutta High Court, directed him to study both Oriental and Western cultures. A voracious reader with a prodigious memory, Narendra (as the young man was called) excelled in his studies at Presidency College, and at the General Assembly's Institution which had been founded by the Scottish General Missionary Board. Calcutta was then passing through strong tides of social change, reflecting the impact of Western ideas. Narendra could not ignore the problems created by British rule, which disturbed many thoughtful Indians, and he accepted membership in the Brahmo-samaj—a society which was then the spearhead of the social reform movement in Bengal. During this period of questioning, he developed an intense desire to reconcile faith and intellect. Coming into contact with Sri Ramakrishna, a renowned saint, he gradually became, under this famous teacher's magnetic influence, a favourite disciple. At the age of twenty-one, when Narendra passed his B.A. examination, his father suddenly died, leaving the family in deep debt. Frustra-

tions in material ventures and a heightening spiritual consciousness ultimately turned Narendra's mind away from this mundane life. After the death of his master Ramakrishna in 1886, he renounced the world, assumed the saintly name of Swami Vivekananda, and later organized his brother disciples into a new institution, called the Ramakrishna Mission[1]. From 1888 to 1892, he wandered throughout India among the poor, and became convinced that he should devote his life to educating the multitude.

At about this time, in late 1892, Swami Vivekananda heard about the Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago. His followers urged him to attend it as a representative of Hinduism. The Swami agreed that he should go, having long felt a need to see America, and he hoped also to obtain financial help there for his mission. He set sail by way of Hong Kong and Japan, and reached Chicago in July 1893, two months before the Parliament was scheduled to open. Coming from a warmer climate, with the meager provisions of a monk, he soon found that the £187 he had brought with him was insufficient to pay for all the clothing, travel, and board and lodging that he needed. As he wrote to a friend in India:

> 'You cannot hire a cab for less than three rupees [one dollar], nor get a cigar for less than four annas [eight cents]'.... 'The Americans are so rich that they spend money like water, and by forced legislation keep up the price of everything so high that no other nation on earth can approach it'.... 'Not even in Europe is there a country like this in luxury.'

Hoping to minimize his expenses, he left Chicago for Boston, where, he had heard, the prices were lower. On the train he met an elderly lady, Miss Katherine Abbott Sanborn, who invited him to live at her farm, 'Breezy Meadows', in Metcalf, Massachusetts. Miss Sanborn, a lecturer and author, was a gregarious person by nature, and provided the Swami with many introductions. Through her, he met Professor John Henry Wright of Harvard, who, profoundly impressed, made the necessary arrangements for him to attend the Parliament of Religions. During the few weeks that the Swami spent in and around Massachusetts, he delivered lectures on social and cultural life in India and attracted good audiences in Boston, Annisquam, Salem, Lynn, and Saratoga Springs. Then he went on to the Chicago World's Fair to attend the Parliament. Seated among the representatives of religions from around the world, Swami Vivekananda, dressed in saffron and orange robes and a turban, immediately commanded attention. He made, on the opening day, an electrifying speech, ending with these words:

> 'Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism . . . have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair.... I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.'

Invitations to lecture started pouring in from around the country. Wherever he went, Swami Vivekananda was asked to live with American families, and he was impressed by their open-hearted manner: 'An American meets you for five minutes on board a train and you are his friend, and the next moment he invites you as a guest to his

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[1] The Swami at this time formed his brother-disciples into a monastic brotherhood, and later in 1897 with help from lay devotees, founded the Ramakrishna Mission. He took the name of Swami Vivekananda only shortly before leaving for America the first time. —*Ed.*

home, and opens the secret of his whole living there.' American homes, in the Swami's opinion, were in no way inferior to those anywhere else in the world:

> 'I have heard many stories about the American home: of liberty running into licence, of unwomanly women smashing under their feet all the peace and happiness of home-life in their mad liberty-dance, and much nonsense of that type.... American women! A hundred lives would not be sufficient to pay my deep gratitude to you!... "The Oriental hyperbole" alone expresses the depth of Oriental gratitude—if the Indian Ocean were an inkstand, the highest mountain of the Himalaya the pen, the earth the scroll and time itself the writer, still it would not express my gratitude to you.'

To Swami Vivekananda, the American woman was the central pillar, not only of the home, but of the society as a whole: 'It is the women who are the life and soul of this country. All learning and culture are centred in them.' Coming from Bengal, where the Goddess Durga, the Divine Mother, has been worshiped through the ages as the manifestation of the power and energy which controls and directs the world, the Swami believed that American women represented that same force in their society:[2]

> 'They are like Lakshmi (the Goddess of Fortune) in beauty, and like Sarasvati (the Goddess of Learning) in virtues—they are the Divine Mother incarnate... If I can raise a thousand such Madonnas —Incarnations of the Divine Mother—in our country before I die, I shall die in peace.'

The Swami, however, could not accept America's own sense of [attitude toward ?] its women, and found some social customs unpardonable. He told a women's group: 'When I... see what you call gallantry, my soul is filled with disgust.' Women were treated as nothing more than sexual play-things:

> 'Your men... say, "Oh madam, how beautiful are your eyes!" What right have they to do this? How dare a man venture so far, and how can you women, permit it? Such things develop the less noble side of humanity.'

As a result, Vivekananda argued, American women paid undue attention to their physical beauty: 'To them, ministering to their body is a great thing.... A thousand instruments for paring nails, ten thousand for hair-cutting, and who can count the varieties of dress and toilet and perfumery? ... Their enjoyment is their God.' Himself a monk, and coming from a society in which a very high standard of purity and chastity was demanded from unmarried girls, he lamented moral laxity. 'I should very much like our women to have your intellectuality,' he said, addressing a gathering of ladies in New York, 'but not if it must be at the cost of purity. I admire you for all that you know, but I dislike the way that you cover what is bad with roses and call it good. Intellectuality is not the highest good. Morality and spirituality are the things for which we strive.'

Between American and Indian marriage customs the Swami saw enormous differences. For instance, in India, most of the family relationships were through sons, because the daughter, after being married, would go to live with her husband's family. But in America:

> '... in this country relationship is through girls. The son marries and no longer belongs to the family, but the daughter's husband pays frequent visits to his father-in-law's house. They say:
>
> Son is son till he gets a wife.
> Daughter is daughter all her life.'

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[2] This holy attitude of the Swami towards all women was a result, not simply of his having been born a Bengali, but—more basically—of the teaching of his Master and of his own spiritual realizations. —*Ed.*

In the Swami's own society, a girl's marriage was settled, in her early childhood, by her father, but an American girl would select her own husband. He had to be a man after her own heart and, furthermore, he had to be a moneyed man or one of great social prominence. One husband-hunting scenario was, to the Swami, particularly astonishing:

> 'Here near my lodgings is the Waldorf Hotel, the rendezvous of lots of titled but penniless Europeans on show for "Yankee" heiresses to buy. You may have any selection here, the stock is so full and varied. There is the man who talks no English; there are others who lisp a few words which no one can understand; and others are there who talk nice English but their chance is not so great as that of the dumb ones—the girls do not think them enough foreign who talk plain English fluently.'

As a religious reformer, Swami Vivekananda lamented the absence in America of a real understanding of God: 'Nowhere have I heard so much about love, life and liberty as in this country, but nowhere is it less understood. Here God is either a terror or a healing power.' He was critical of women who, having failed to find a husband, became 'very churchy': 'Between them and the priests they make hell of earth and make a mess of religion.' He found the American clergy too much involved in material pleasure and, moreover, ill-equipped for the work assigned to them. A pervasive materialism, he felt, hindered the development of American religion. 'The people of this Christian land will recognise religion only if you can cure diseases, work miracles, and open up avenues to money.' Americans were still much too young to understand renunciation.

The Swami, however, did feel that some spiritual benefit could arise from American materialism: only through material progress could the misery of the poor be reduced. To this extent, America, with its message of hope and promise of dignity, fulfilled the precepts of his own Vedanta religion. He later recalled:

> 'Aye, you may be astonished to hear that as practical Vedantists the Americans are better than we are. I used to stand on the sea-shore at New York and look at the immigrants coming from different countries, crushed, down-trodden, hopeless, unable to look a man in the face.... And mark you, in six months those very men were walking erect, well-clothed, looking everybody in the face; and what made this wonderful difference? Say, this man comes from Armenia, or somewhere else where he was crushed down beyond all recognition. ...Even the very air murmured around him as it were, "There is no hope for you, hopeless and a slave you must remain", while the strong man crushed the life out of him. And when he landed in the streets of New York, he found a gentleman, well-dressed, shaking him by the hand; it made no difference that the one was in rags and the other well-clad. ...He went about, and found a new life, that there was a place where he was a man among men. Perhaps he went to Washington, shook hands with the President of the United States, and perhaps there he saw men coming from distant villages, peasants, and ill-clad, and all shaking hands with the President....'

'I love the Yankee land,' the Swami later wrote to a friend. 'I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins and mope a life out about old histories and keep sighing about the ancients.' He marvelled at what America had to offer—'the place, the people, the opportunity for everything new'. His stay transformed his attitudes about India; he became 'horribly radical'. He wanted to infuse some of the American spirit into his homeland, 'that awful mass of conservative jelly-fish', where an accumulation of traditions, which had outlived their usefulness, had put a stop to progress. 'Caste', he wrote, 'is simply a

crystallized social institution, which after doing its service is now filling the atmosphere of India with its stench, and it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality.' Freedom was at the heart of what America could teach India; it was 'the only condition of growth; take that off, the result is degeneration'. Yet, in the end, each nation had something to teach the other: 'As regards spirituality, the Americans are far inferior to us, but their society is far superior to ours. We will teach them our spirituality, and assimilate what is best in their society.'

Having found a very receptive audience in the United States for the propagation of his religious ideas, Swami Vivekananda remained there for about three years. He had succeeded in winning many friends, admirers, and some disciples; he had even been lionized, for a time, by New York's Four Hundred, who flocked to his yoga classes. The Swami left for India arriving there in January 1897, to return only once more in 1899. He spent most of his time, about a year, on the West Coast in San Francisco and Los Angeles; and ultimately he founded a centre in the San Antonio Valley, south-east of San Francisco, called 'Shanti Ashram'. After his return to India, he devoted all his time and energy to the development of his mission—to ameliorate the condition of the masses. His failing health did not allow him to continue for very long, and he left this world in 1902. The Vedanta Society, which he established in America, now serves thousands of people who seek spiritual solace in this mad race for power and money.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1970). References—*Gospel*: No. 1, p. 654; No. 2, p. 796; No. 3, p. 339; No. 4, p. 675; No. 5, p. 569; No. 6, pp. 437-8; No. 7, p. 169; No. 9, p. 725. *Great Master*: No. 8, pp. 237, 239.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works,* Volume II (1963), pp. 82-3.

On the momentous occasion of the American Bicentennial, while offering our sincere greetings and good wishes to the great Republic and her citizens, we have tried in this month's Editorial essay to analyse some of the basic national and cultural issues facing that country and people, and suggest possible solutions from a religious point of view.

'Education, Science, and Spirituality in the Light of Vedānta', by Swami Ranganathananda, is the second and concluding instalment of his Convocation Address at the University of Burdwan, West Bengal. The Address was delivered on 20 February 1976, and is reproduced here by the kind permission of Burdwan University authorities.

Humanity is constantly struggling to create unity, harmony, and peace at various levels of life. But this struggle usually

leads to failure and fiasco. This will be so as long as the efforts are confined to altering external situations, and not directed to transforming man from within. Dissension, disharmony and discord originate mostly from man's unregenerate nature and conduct; the external conditions play only a secondary part—and that mainly one of exacerbation. The great religious founders and prophets have invariably pointed out man himself as the real trouble-maker, and laid the whole emphasis on changing him. When a change for the better begins within man, external situations also tend to become better. A person with inner peace and love creates around himself an atmosphere of harmony and unity. In 'How to Work for Unity, Harmony and Peace Anywhere', Swami Budhananda, our former Editor, discusses this important theme in the light of the life and teaching of the Buddha as well as some other great sages.

The second and concluding part of this Essay on Applied Religion will be published in our next issue.

Despite what his critics and detractors say, the Prophet of Islam was a towering moral personality. Vivid outlines of this greatness emerge from contemporary records and biographies written in the centuries after Mohammed's death. Without possessing great qualities of head and heart, he could not have founded an enduring, powerful nation—much less a world religion! Faith in God, truthfulness, courage, resoluteness tempered by mercy, were some of the virtues that formed the core of his personality. 'In the Footsteps of Mohammed' is an instructive character-sketch of the Prophet. We would like to draw our readers' attention to another 'Profile' on Mohammed, published in our September 1975 issue, as supplementary reading to the present one.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

TEN PRINCIPAL UPANISHADS: BY N. A. NIKAM, Published by Somaiya Publications, Pvt. Ltd., 172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400014, 1974, pp. xxii+179, Price Rs. 30/-.

The Upanishads are replete with the perennial questions of the whence and the whither of man and the universe. The philosophical reading public may well be conversant with many great modern works on the Upanishads including *The Principal Upanishads* by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The present slender volume does not equal most of them in extent and completeness of treatment, but is interesting in its own way. The author, in his inimitable style, has touched on certain basic problems that have particularly interested him in the ten principal Upanishads—*Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka* and *Mandukya.*

The book has twelve chapters—the first two concerned with the nature of the fundamental questions in the Upanishads, and the remaining ten, each concerned with one of the Upanishads named above. The book, though comprised of short chapters, covers a wide area, bringing so many Upanishads within its purview, and as such, no summary of the entire contents can be manageably attempted here. S. S. Raghavachar, in an appreciative Foreword to the volume, has given a good synopsis of the chapters of the book.

To those steeped in the philosophical thought of the contemporary West and enamoured of the Verification Principle of the Positivists, the following words of the author should give food for thought:

'The Self "is to be seen, is to be heard, is to be reflected on, is to be meditated upon; when, verily, the Self is seen, heard, reflected on, and known, then all this is known." So said Yajnavalkya to his wife Maitreyi in the *Brihadaranyaka*. This is a Verification Principle of the Upanishads: What is *heard* is to be *seen,* and what is *meditated* upon

is to be *lived* "here and now", *iha ced avedid atha satyam asti,* truth is to be known and to be *lived* here, here alone. The Verification Principle is not verified by what is heard but by what is seen: and so it is in a life lived "here", here alone, that truth meditated upon is verified.' (p. 110)

The book is a readable addition to the existing literature on Upanishadic thought, available in English.

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THE MIND OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: BY GAUTAM SEN, Published by Jaico Publishing House, 125 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay, 1. 1975, pp. 142, Price Rs. 6/-.

In this interesting combination of anthology and running commentary by the author, the multi-faceted personality of Swami Vivekananda emerges in its fullness. The writer sketches the background that called for such a heroic soldier of God as Vivekananda, and describes how he re-established faith in spirituality in an age that was given to doubt and scepticism. Swamiji was not merely a yogi and saint but also a social thinker and revolutionary. The author shows to what extent Swamiji shared the vision of Communism and in what radical manner he differed from its exponents—how he was a socialist with an Indian voice. There is a chapter on the assimilation of Raja Yoga with Vedanta. Love is confidently envisaged as the basis of a future society in which the individual and the collectivity, Matter and Spirit, will be harmonized.

It is a pity that such a well-argued presentation should be marred in places by the too colloquial and at times obscene language adopted by the author—especially since his style is such that his own words and those of Swamiji are often hard to separate! It does seem to throw doubt on the author's depth of understanding of the mind of Swamiji.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

PORTRAIT OF GURU: BY SWAMI ISWARANANDA GIRI, Published by Samvit Sadhanayana, Santa Sarovar, Mt. Abu—Rajasthan, 1975, pp. 138, Price Rs. 6.50

RESIDUAL REMINISCENCES OF RAMANA: BY S. S. COHEN, Published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India, 1975, pp. 40, Price Rs. 1.50

MY LIFE AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM: BY SURI NAGAMA (Tr. by D. S. Sastri), Published by Sri Ramanasramam, 1975, pp. x + 150, Price Rs. 4/-

CRITICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS OF PROF. R. D. RANADE'S PHILOSOPHY: BY B. R. KULKARNI, Published by Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion—Belgaum, 1974, pp. xvi + 188, Price Rs. 12/-

TAMIL

SRI BHAGAVAT-VACHANAMRITAM: BY M. VENKATARAMAYYA, Tr., from English, by R. Vishwanathan), Published by Sri Ramanasramam, 1976, pp. 416, Price Rs. 6/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME—MYLAPORE, MADRAS

REPORT: APRIL 1974—MARCH 1975

This Home, the foremost charitable institution of the Ramakrishna Mission in South India, was started in 1905 under the guidance of Swami Ramakrishnananda, the illustrious disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and first president of Madras Math. Started with only five inmates, the Home has grown till it now maintains about 320 poor boys. Meanwhile it has fostered the several other educational institutions of the Ramakrishna Mission that have come up in Madras.

ORGANIZATION: The Home consists of three sections: High School, Collegiate, and Technical. The High-School section (Junior Hostel) is in the main building of the Home, and most of its boys attend the Ramakrishna Mission Residential High School, in the same building and run by the Home; a few attend the pre-university Class of Vivekananda College near-by. The students of the Collegiate and Technical sections are housed in a single Senior Hostel in which the latter section studies; the Collegiate boys study in Vivekananda College. Further, two other schools are managed by the Home: the Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Primary School. Mylapore, and the Ramakrishna Mission Middle School, Malliankaranai, in Chingleput district. In conformity with the laws of Tamil Nadu, each School has its own Managing Committee with representatives from the Educational Agency (the Home), the Headmaster, and teachers.

General Activities: *Admissions*—Based on pupils' academic abilities and financial needs, there were this year 65 admissions to High School, 22 to Collegiate courses and 42 to Technical courses. At the year's end, total enrollments were respectively, 165, 44, and 107 students (P.U.C. comprising 11 of the second group). *Health* of students continued quite satisfactory, under supervision of a visiting doctor and the staff of Ramakrishna Math's Dispensary. *Tutorial guidance* was given by teachers of the High School and Technical Institute, whose quarters are nearby the Home, with supervision by the Warden (monastic member). *Work* of the Home is managed by a committee of students (*'Seva Praveena Samithi'*), including not only the ordinary tasks like food-purchasing, cleaning premises, etc., but also the daily *puja* in shrine, and nursing of the sick. *Moral and Religious* training is conducted through the tutoring-plan above-mentioned, plus classes in Upanishads, *Bhagavad-gita,* and in devotional singing, essay contests, symposia, etc. *Library* and *Reading-room,* in the Senior Hostel, contains now 2,627 volumes; more than 15 periodicals were on hand. *Festivals*: The staff and students of the Home attended and participated in the celebrations of the Ramakrishna Math (Madras) for birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Swami Ramakrishnananda. At the Home, Navaratri season was occasion for religious discourses by eminent scholars, as well as free music concerts; and on the Akshya-tritiya day appropriate worship was done in the Home's shrine, plus *Upanayanam* (sacred thread ceremony) for 18 boys. *Results*: *Collegiate* section: In April 1974, 15 appeared for Degree Examinations and all passed, all in class One; also 15 appeared for P.U.C. Examination, again all passing, in class One! *High School*: Of the 40 appearing for S.S.L.C. (Secondary School Leaving Certificate) Public Examinations, all were declared eligible for college, and 20 got more than 400 marks. *Technical*: (a) Pre-Technical Course examinations: 42 appeared, all passed, 31 in class One; (b) Mechanical engineering: 36 appeared, all passed, 29 in class One. *Scholarships*: *Collegiate*: All in the P.U.C. had full fee remission, as ordered by the State government; further 49 scholarships of varying types were distributed among the 44 students. *High School*: the management gave scholarships in deserving cases for paying Examination fees, and purchasing books. Government grants came to deserving pupils from Backward Communities, children of ex-servicemen, etc. *Technical*: students of Pre-technical class have full fee remission; likewise, this year, 38 senior students (from Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes). Further, 91 scholarships of various kinds, were given this year.

Special Activities: *High School*—Of its six classes (Standards VI to XI) the first two were revived this year after lapse of over 14 years. All classes are in Tamil, including all basic studies plus emphasis on character-formation, with moral and religious instruction. Extracurricularly, spinning, weaving and gardening are encouraged, with ample sports programmes, an active Boy-Scout troop, Pupils' Literary Union, etc. *Technical Institute*: Comprised of a Pre-technical course of one year and Diploma Course in Mechanical Engineering (two years), the curriculum is supplemented by a number of technical lectures for senior students, film showings, visits to factories, and other educational institutions, and a 'Book Bank'. *Primary School, Mylapore*: including Standards I to V, the school occupies a building in the compound of the Staff Quarters of the Home. This year there were 205 boys and 203 girls, with 14 teachers of whom ten were ladies. Midday meals were provided for 40 children. *Middle School, Mallianakaranai*: with Standards I to VIII, this school serves a rural community, agriculture being taught as pre-vocational subject. There are eight teachers for the 185 pupils, of whom 28 are girls this year. Midday meals were given to about 100 children: in the hostel attached to the school were 33 boarders, 24 being from Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes.

Finances: Besides the various scholarships and government grants mentioned above, the Home has endowments from private benefactors which this year yielded interest and dividends of more than Rs. 225,000. The Endowments were further reinforced by Rs. 92,312,63 this year; and subscriptions plus donations came to a total of over Rs. 110,000/-. General government grants further totalled at least Rs. 236,200/-.

Though the institution from its beginning has received unstinted support from the generous public, still in recent years the great increases in expenses especially for foodstuffs has thrown considerable strain on the management. To continue the work even at its present level, the help of friends and sympathizers of the Home is necessary in large measure. Contributions may kindly be sent to The Secretary, Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Mylapore, Madras 600004.

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